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The Free and Independent

*The Trials, Temptations and Triumphs
of the Parliamentary Elector*

By

Hartley Kemball Cook

Illustrated

A House of Commons cannot afford to be
above its own Constituencies in intelligence,
knowledge, or patriotism

GEORGE GROTE

London

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TO
E. K. C.
WIFE AND PARTNER

FOREWORD

THIS book is concerned with the people who, in a period of nearly seven centuries, have sent their representatives to the Parliament of our country, at first without realising the importance of what they were doing, then content to allow the few to usurp the privilege of the many and, then, awaking to the significance of Parliamentary Government and fighting, sometimes to the death, for the transformation of an oligarchy into a true democracy.

A short bibliography of works which may be helpful to students of the subject will be found at the end of this book. For chapters II and IV I have followed the guidance of the portly volumes of Merewether and Stephens' *History of Boroughs* and of Royal dealings with them. For the whole subject there can be no better guide than that storehouse of scholarship and research, Porritt's *Unreformed House of Commons*.

H. K. C.

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CHAPTER I

KNIGHTS OF THE SHIRE

Books about the House of Commons are concerned usually with the Officers and Members of the House, but the hero of my book is the Free and Independent Elector and we shall be concerned with the gradual development of interest in the privilege of voting, from those early days when the privilege was so little valued that the people tried to ignore or evade the Sheriff's Precept and towns which believed themselves to stand high in the Royal favour petitioned the King that they might be allowed to waive the expensive right of sending Members to Parliament, down to the day when men and, later, women, fought and sometimes died for the right to vote at Parliamentary elections.

We shall see also how it happened that, starting with something not far short of manhood suffrage, we came, a century and a quarter ago, to a state of things in which it was computed that 206 Members of Parliament were returned by 160 individuals, down to the present day when, with universal suffrage, something like 32,000,000 people are entitled to vote.

It may be useful at the outset to consider a few figures in order to show in tabular form the growth of the Franchise with successive Reform Acts.



TROUBLE IN THE STABLE
The Back end objects to blinkers

THE BRITISH ISLES

Date	Male Population (approx.)	Electorate (approx.)	Percentage (approx.)
1829	11,000,000	600,000	5
¹ 1832	12,500,000	1,000,000	8
² 1869	15,000,000	2,500,000	16
³ 1884	17,250,000	5,000,000	29
	Total Population		
⁴ 1918	46,500,000	21,000,000	45
	Total Population except Eire		
⁵ 1929	45,600,000	28,500,000	62
⁶ 1945	48,450,000	32,836,419	68

NOTES

1. First Reform Act, 1832
2. Reform Act, 1867-9
3. Reform Act, 1884
4. Franchise given to Women of 30, 1918
5. Franchise given to Women on same terms as men
- 5 and 6. Population of Eire excluded

The small increase in male population between 1832-1869 was due to heavy decline in Ireland.

We shall see who elected Members of Parliament at different periods, how they did the electing, with what reluctance they paid the Members whom they elected and with what eagerness, as time went on, they accepted payment from candidates until the terms "free" and "independent" had ceased to have any real meaning. Indeed, while the Englishman continued to hold up his Constitution as a model to the whole world, Lord John Russell, the introducer of the First Reform Bill in 1831, found no difficulty in exposing the hollowness of this claim.

A stranger who was told that this country is unparalleled in wealth and industry, and more civilised, and more enlightened than any country was before it, that it is a country that prides itself on its freedom and that once in every seven years it elects representatives from its population to act as the guardians and preservers of that freedom—would be anxious and curious to see how that representation is formed, and how the people

choose their representatives, to whose faith and guardianship they entrust their free and liberal institutions. Such a person would be very much astonished if he were taken to a ruined mound, and told that that mound sent two representatives to Parliament—if he were taken to a stone wall and told that three niches in it sent two representatives to Parliament—if he were taken to a park where no houses were to be seen and told that that park sent two representatives to Parliament ; but if he were told all this, and were astonished at hearing it, he would be still more astonished if he were to see large and opulent towns, full of enterprise, and industry, and intelligence, containing vast magazines of every species of manufacture, and were then told that these towns sent no representatives to Parliament. Such a person would be still more astonished if he were taken to Liverpool, where there is a large Constituency and told, "Here you will have a fine specimen of a popular election." He would see bribery employed to the greatest extent and in the most unblushing manner ; he would see every voter receiving a number of guineas in a box, as the price of his corruption ; and after such a spectacle, he would no doubt be much astonished that a nation whose representatives are thus chosen could perform the functions of legislation at all, or enjoy respect in any degree. I say then that if the question before the House is a question of reason, the present state of representation is against reason.

To such a point had our boasted institutions brought us in five centuries and a half from the day when Simon de Montfort, in arms against his King, summoned what was to be the model of succeeding Parliaments.

It was the writ issued by Earl Simon that first summoned the merchant and the trader to sit beside the Knight of the Shire, the Baron, and the Bishop in the Parliament of the Realm.

Let us first consider the Knight of the Shire. We need not go back beyond the Norman Kings to the old Saxon Witenagemot. The Norman Kings customarily summoned representatives of the principal Ecclesiastical and Civil classes to attend them, partly to receive their homage, but also to act as a Council of State. Thus the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, in the last year of the Conqueror's reign, tells us that

This year the King bare his crown and held his Court in Winchester at Easter, and he so arranged that he was by the Pentecost at Westminster . . . afterwards he moved about so that he came by Lammas to Sarum ; where he was met by his Councillors and all the landmen that were of any account over all England became this man's vassals as they were . . .

Elsewhere the Chronicle mentions that the Conqueror

Wore his Crown at Easter at Winchester, at Pentecost at Westminster and at Christmas at Gloucester ; and at these times all the men of England were with him—Archbishops, Bishops and Abbots, Earls, Thegns and Knights.

This was a Feudal Court, but it is assumed that such few laws as were made in those early times and often named after the place where they were made were considered at these gatherings.

We come to something rather more definite with the Great Charter of 1215 which enacted that exceptional feudal aids must not be levied without the Common Council of the Realm ; but we have not yet a real elected Parliament, like Edward I's Model of 1295. One of the first mentions of the representatives of the people occurs when in 1254 the Sheriffs were directed to send four Knights from every Shire to consider what could be done to recruit the Exchequer of Henry III, then in a parlous state.

It was the Sheriff of every county whose task it was, from the time of the Model Parliament onward, to return two Knights from every Shire to Parliament. How were these elected and by whom ? There is reason to believe that the method of election was of the simplest, for a learned writer on the "Office of Sheriff" at a much later date laid it down that

The election of Knights and Burgesses may be by voices or by holding up of hands or by any other like way by which it may be discovered who hath the greater number.

The electors before 1430 seem to have been, at least in

theory, the whole body of resident Freemen of the County or Shire. The place of election was not necessarily the County town but any place convenient or having behind it custom going back forty years or more. It was the business of the whole body of Electors to find the money for expenses and for the salaries of the Knights.

But in the earliest time men were not particularly anxious to be sent to Parliament. Parliament in the early days was an ambulatory body ; it depended largely on the movements of the King and members were summoned to it accordingly. It would meet for a few days and would then be prorogued and the next meeting might be at the other end of the Country. Travelling was not only difficult but costly and dangerous. Moreover, men of the class from which the Knights were selected would be country gentlemen with their own estates to manage and it is easy to see that attendance at Parliament more or less at the King's whim or dependent on the state of his finances might be highly inconvenient. Moreover, the position must often have been invidious. Naturally, the electors would expect their representatives to keep down taxation, while it would be the object of the King to get as much out of them as possible.

From the collection of Parliamentary Writs made by Sir F. Palgrave we can trace something of the position and it appears that what often happened was that there was bargaining between Knights of the Shire and electors on the question of wages. Thus in a case in 1234 there is a Writ de Expensis which includes a charge of fourteen marks for twenty-four days' attendance at the Parliament and two days coming and going and two days returning at the rate of 3s. 4d. each a day. One occasion a Sheriff of Somerset was "attached to answer for having assessed the wages for one of the Knights of the Shire at no more than 1s. 4d. a day." The Grand Jury for the Wapentake of West Derby complained :

(A.D. 1320) that the Sheriff of Lancashire had returned two Knights without the assent of the County and had levied £20 for their expenses ; whereas the County could, by their own election, have found two good and sufficient men, who would have gone to Parliament for ten marks, or at the most for £10.

This feeling that the Knights of the Shire were an expensive luxury for the Counties seems to have been general at this early age and Sheriffs were often put to considerable trouble in order to obtain money for the wages and expenses of the County representatives. Thus in 1331 there was trouble in Kent when a second writ had to be issued to the Sheriff of Kent ordering him either to make the necessary levy or to show reason why he should not do so. To this the Sheriff retorted

That at various County Courts he had caused the men, almost all of whom held by gavelkind tenure, to assemble ; that at three successive County Courts they had declared unanimously that they were not in any manner bound to contribute to the expenses of the Knights of the Shire, nor could they, and that there were only very few freeholders in the County, and from whom the expenses could not be levied.

The usual allowance was four shillings a day for a Knight of the Shire and to this was added as time went on a further allowance for expenses in going and returning, and it was argued at a later date that the loss of wages was "the only punishment the law had made for the absence of Parliament men from their attendance." Eventually, in the 17th century, the custom of exacting wages began to fall into disuse since it had become a legitimate ambition to be made a Member of Parliament and candidates were willing to pay for the privilege. Of this we shall see more in later chapters.

The Knights of the Shire began early to use the privilege of demanding the redress of grievances before granting supplies and in 1376 one of the Knights from Buckinghamshire thus encouraged his fellows to realise their importance.

He said that he had had a dream in which he was in the Chapter House of St. Paul's with his fellow Knights discussing these matters. Suddenly he saw on the floor seven gold coins and went into the Choir to ask who had dropped them. He could get no information until an old monk asked what he held in his hand and he explained that he had found these coins but that no one claimed them. "Nay," said the old monk, "they are the seven gifts of the Spirit entrusted to you and your colleagues. The gold is your wisdom granted to you that you may be able to reform all that is amiss and also to clothe your decision in graceful language when you speak before great men of the Realm."

In 1430 we come to one of the landmarks in the history of the Parliamentary Elector. It was in that year that Parliament passed a Bill regulating the election of Knights of the Shire. This Act of Henry VI's reign was of so much importance that it may be quoted in full :

Whereas the Elections of Knights of the Shire to come to the Parliament of our Lord the King in many Counties of the Realm of England, have now of late been by very great, outrageous and excessive numbers of people dwelling within the same Counties of the Realm of England, of the which most part was of people of small substance and no value whereof everyone of them pretended a voice equivalent, as for such Elections to be made, with the most worthy Knights and Esquires dwelling within the same Counties, whereby manslaughter and riots, batteries and divisions among the gentlemen and other people of the same Counties shall very likely rise and be unless convenient and due remedy be provided in their behalf. Our Lord the King considering the premises, hath provided, ordained and established by authority of the present Parliament that the Knights of the Shire to be chosen within the same Realm of England to come to the Parliament of our Lord the King hereafter to be holden, shall be chosen in every County of the Realm of England by the people dwelling and resident in the same County, whereof any of them shall have freehold land and tenement of 40s. a year at least above all charges.

The wording of this Act provides one of the grounds for thinking that before it was passed, there was something like

manhood suffrage for freemen as well as for freeholders in the election of men, who were not necessarily actual Knights, though of that class, resident in the County, a rule which fell into disuse at a later date. The Act is interesting in more ways than one. It shows that, at least in many parts of the country, the old lack of interest in the election of



WALPOLE CHAIRED

County representatives had given way to a very different state of things since the Sheriffs must have reported tumultuous scenes at Elections. Thus the Franchise was now regarded as something worth having. And very soon we are finding more proofs that the gaining of an Election was becoming an important matter with the landowners of the Counties. In the year 1449, at the time of Jack Cade's rebellion, one

of the grievances on which he laid emphasis was concerned with the Election of Knights of the Shire. He complained that the freedom of Elections had been taken from the people "by the great men who sent letters to their tenants to choose such men as they approved not" and less than twenty years later there is evidence that candidates had begun that treating of electors which was to reach so scandalous a stage in the future. In the early stages it may not have amounted to much more than the provision of a bull for baiting for which, down to a much later date, members for Beverley were said to be responsible, or prizes for a race meeting (or its early equivalent), such as the Stanleys used to provide for Preston.

The 40s. freehold Franchise, maintained through centuries had the original merit of simplicity, it being the duty of the Sheriff to satisfy himself of the justice of claims to vote either through the production by the Elector of his receipt for land tax or by taking evidence on oath. As time went on we shall see that the right to vote was extended in many directions and much of the old simplicity disappeared, it being the object of both sides to poll as many votes as possible, hoping that when, as happened very often, the other side petitioned against a return, the claim would be upheld and so another class of Elector would be brought in.

It became more or less a point of honour among territorial families in the Counties to keep the County representation in the hands of this or that Party. The cost of the election, or the greater part of it, passed to the candidates with the results summed up by Lord John Russell in 1831 :

Everybody knows and must have lamented the enormous expense to which candidates are put in bringing voters to the poll. In Yorkshire, without a contest, it costs nearly £150,000 ; and in Devonshire, the Electors are obliged to travel 40 miles, over bad cross roads, which occupies one day, the next is consumed in polling, and the third in

returning home. The poll is a manifest source of vast expense and most inconvenient delay.

The Knights of the Shire long maintained a position in the public mind superior to that held by the representatives of boroughs and towns. Perhaps there is something in the explanation which a satirist put in the mouth of one of these County members at a later date : "They think we're honest for they know we're dull." However this may be it is worth noting that in Cromwell's abortive scheme of Parliamentary Reform he increased the representation of the Counties. Clarendon tells us :

He did not observe the old course in sending writs out to all the little boroughs throughout England . . . He seemed to take a more equal way by appointing more Knights for every Shire to be chosen, and fewer Burgesses, whereby the number of the whole was much lessened ; and yet the people being left to their own election, it was not thought an ill-temperament, and was then generally looked upon as an alteration fit to be more warrantably made and in a better time.

In January, 1770, Lord Chatham, supporting a motion that the House of Lords should take into consideration the state of the country, made a speech on Parliamentary Reform, in which he admitted the corruption then existing in Borough representation ; but he went on to deal with the representation of the Counties :

It is, I think, still preserved pure and uncorrupted . . . the infusion of health which I now allude to would be to permit every County to elect one member more in addition to their present representation. The Knights of the Shire approach nearest to the Constitutional representatives of the country because they represent the soil. It is not in the little dependent boroughs, it is in the great cities and counties that the strength and vigour of the Constitution resides, and by them alone, if an unhappy question should ever arise, will the Constitution be honestly and firmly defended. I would increase that strength because it is the only remedy

we have against the profligacy of the times, the corruption of the people, and the ambition of the Crown.

And he closed his speech by suggesting that an additional member should be given to every County in England and Scotland.

Just sixty years later, in introducing the first Reform Bill, Lord John Russell said of the County representation :

Next, we propose an addition to the members of the larger Counties—a species of reform always recommended, and which, I believe, Lord Chatham was almost the first to advocate.

CHAPTER II

THE BOROUGH

AT least in its earliest stages the election of Knights of the Shire was a business comparatively simple. Far different is the history of the representatives of cities and boroughs. In 1295, Edward I took up Simon de Montfort's idea by summoning "from every city, borough, and leading town" within his Realm two burgesses to sit with the Knights, Nobles and Barons of the Great Council. The plan was a useful one for the Crown since the representatives of the towns were more ready to obey the King's wishes than the other Estates of the Realm and it is on record that only once in Edward's reign did the burgesses show a disinclination to support the Crown.

But it must be remembered that, through the Sheriffs, the King could choose which of the Boroughs should be represented. How this worked is illustrated by J. R. Green in his *History of the English People*.

The determination was left to the Sheriff and at a hint from the Royal Council the Sheriff of Wilts would cut down the number of represented Boroughs in his Shire from eleven to three, or a Sheriff of Bucks. would declare that he could find but a single Borough, that of Wycomb, within the bounds of the County. Nor was the exercise of the prerogative hampered by any anxiety on the part of the towns to claim representative privileges. It was difficult to suspect that a power before which the Crown would have to bow lay in the ranks of soberly-clad traders, summoned only to assess the contributions of their Boroughs, and whose attendance was as difficult to secure as it seemed burdensome to themselves and the towns who sent them.

People in the towns did not regard election to Parliament as in any way more important than election to any local

office ; the actual election lay in the hands of a few of the principal burgesses in the County Court, to whom the matter was deputed. On the other hand, the wage of a Member of Parliament from a Borough was 2s. a day and this fell on the inhabitants in general. Edward I summoned representatives from 165 towns, about 60 of which obeyed once but not again. Lancashire sent ten members to Edward's Model Parliament ; two Knights of the Shire and two Burgesses each from Lancaster, Liverpool, Preston, and Wigan, but, except in 1307, Wigan and Liverpool did not send again. Preston stopped sending after 1331 and Lancaster after 1337. In each case, the Sheriff's return pleaded poverty. Queen Elizabeth added Newton and Clitheroe. Not until 1654 was Manchester invited and then only once. Some towns in different parts of the country which believed themselves entitled to the King's favour, such as Kingston, actually petitioned that they might be excused the unwanted privilege of sending members.

Thrifty Boroughs drove as hard a bargain as they could with members if they could not escape electing them. There remains an agreement between John Strange, Member for Dunwich in 1463, and the Burgesses in regard to :

The Parliament to be holden at Westminster, for which, whether it hold for longer time or short, or whether it fortuneth to be prorogued, the said John Strange granteth no more to be taken for his wages than a cade full of herrings and a half-barrel of herrings to be delivered on Christmas next coming.

Sir Symonds d'Ewes tells us of the Corporation of Westbury :

One Thomas Long, a very simple man, and unfit to serve, had crept into Queen Elizabeth's Parliament of 1571. When questioned how he came to be elected he confessed that he gave the Mayor of Westbury and another £4 for his place.

The complications of the Borough Franchise were many.

Sir William Molesworth, in his *History of the First Reform Bill*, gives a list of the qualifications for an elector in the early 19th century :

Householders, resident householders, householders paying Scot and Lot, inhabitants, resident inhabitants, inhabitants paying Scot and Lot, Burgesses, Capital Burgesses, Burgage holders, freeholders, freemen, resident freemen, Corporations, potwallopers, payers of poor's rates.

Lord John Russell, in 1831, dealing with this tangled question, admitted that :

It is a point of great difficulty to decide to whom the Franchise should be extended. Though it is a point much disputed, I believe it will be found that in ancient times every inhabitant householder resident in a Borough was competent to vote for members of Parliament. As however this arrangement excluded villeins and strangers the Franchise always belonged to a particular body in every town—that the voters were persons of property is obvious from the fact that they were called upon to pay subsidies and taxes. Two different courses seemed to prevail in different places. In some, every person having a house and being free, was admitted to a general participation in the privileges formerly possessed by Burgesses ; in others the Burgesses became a select body, and were converted into a kind of Corporation, more or less exclusive. These differences led to the most difficult and at the same time the most useless questions that men can be called upon to decide.

In considering the complicated development of the right or custom of voting at Parliamentary elections in Boroughs, we cannot do better than follow the principles laid down by Merewether and Stephens in their pre-Reform *History of Boroughs*. They tell us that Boroughs existed from the earliest period of our history and that although all Boroughs were not cities, all cities were Boroughs and had their municipal rights in that character alone.

They were all essentially alike in their objects, constitutions and character as well in England as in Wales, Scotland and Ireland.

The same class of persons originally formed a body of Burgesses in all Boroughs. This class has never been directly changed from the earliest time.

The Burgesses were the permanent free inhabitants of the Boroughs, performing their duties and enjoying their privileges as the free inhabitant householders, paying Scot and bearing Lot, presented, sworn and enrolled at the Court Leet.

They had no other character till the reign of Henry VI when the first Charter of Municipal Incorporation was granted which superinduced upon the original character of Burgess that of Corporator.

The power of selecting the Burgesses now exercised by the Corporations or their select bodies by which in some places the numbers are reduced to the smallest and in others increased to an equally improper amount, is a manifest usurpation and only supported by modern decisions.

Non-resident Burgesses were first introduced in direct defiance of the Parliamentary writ and the Statutes of the Realm in the instances of the persons elected as representatives and afterwards extended by usurpation to the electors.

And they add that it is by "usurpations" that the complicated and sometimes unintelligible system with which the reformers of the last century had to deal, both in the case of election to Parliament and in the abuses which sprang up in the Municipal Corporations, arose.

Porritt, in his admirable *History of the Unreformed House of Commons*, divides the Boroughs into four classes—Scot and Lot Boroughs, Burgage Boroughs, Corporation Boroughs, and Freemen Boroughs.

Merewether and Stephens pointed out that the Scot and Lot qualifications, "though expressed in some instances and omitted in others, is properly applicable to all, meaning beyond doubt those contributing to all the common burdens of the Borough. In some cases a settlement is added as one of the indications of permanent residence." Rather late in electoral history, the minimum residence qualification of six

months was required. The "common burden" has been modernised as equivalent to local rates. Within the general class of Scot and Lot Boroughs came those with the curious title of Potwaller or Potwalloper. Merewether describes Potwallers as housekeepers as distinct from householders, persons "who actually lived in a house and provided themselves ; persons who provided themselves with food and occupied any part of a house provided such part was separate from that of the owner and had a separate entrance." This, which had become a rare genuine qualification by the first quarter of the 19th century, was accepted by the House of Commons as giving a right to vote, but "has led to the greatest possible frauds, impositions and irregularities."

It should be added here, however, that, as towns grew, Borough and Town ceased to be one and the same and the actual number of electors might be small, while the population increased, through the Borough with its electoral privilege remaining within its original area while the town spread round it.

Of Burgage Boroughs, Merewether points out that Burgage tenure "has no legal foundation except as the description of occupiers of houses within a Borough, that is, inhabitant householders." A Burgage tenure has been defined as "consisting of one undivided and indivisible tenement, neither created, not capable of creation within time of memory, which has immemorially given a right of voting ; or an entire indivisible tenement, holden of a superior Lord of the Borough, by an immemorial certain rent, distinctly reserved, and to which the right of voting is incident," and Merewether points out that the essential character of a Borough is the possession of a Free Court or independent jurisdiction separate from the county at large. In 1708 the right of election was declared to reside only in :

The Freeholders of lands or ancient dwelling houses or shambles or

dwelling houses or shambles built upon ancient foundations within the Borough.

When we come to the abuses of the 18th century we shall hear more of these Burgage tenures ; but the Journals of the House of Commons had some curious entries, as that which conferred the right of voting on the "Burgesses of the Salt Pits" at Droitwich.

Prynne traced back Parliamentary elections of Municipal Corporations to the period when Borough elections still took place at the County towns where the County Court was held, at which Knights of the Shire were elected. In 1444 an Act was passed directing the Sheriff to send his precepts to the Borough where the election was to take place, thus separating Borough elections from those of Knights of the Shire. As seats in Parliament became valuable property, Municipal Corporations saw the advantage of keeping elections as much as possible in their own hands although Parliament had declared that elections were to be by the Citizens and Burgesses. In 1569 Hooker laid before the House of Commons a statement explaining the procedure at Borough Elections in England :

The Sheriff of every County, having received his writ, ought forthwith to send his precepts and summonses to the Mayors, Bailiffs, and Head Officers of every city, town, corporate borough, and such places as had been accustomed to send Burgesses within his County, that they do choose and elect among themselves two citizens for every city and two Burgesses for every borough, according to their ancient custom and usage. . . . The Head Officers ought then to assemble themselves and the Aldermen and common Councils of every city and town, and to make choice among themselves of two able and sufficient of every city or town to serve for and in the said Parliament.

This makes it clear that John Hooker (alias Vowell) believed that Corporations had the right to elect. Sometimes towns did throw up men ready to contest these exclusive

claims, but on the whole the Corporations held their ground and established a reign of Municipal Oligarchies which in turn sold themselves and their electoral rights to the highest bidders, and after the Restoration it appeared that only two Municipal Corporations lost their "rights" in this matter of exclusive election.



WILLIAM COBBETT—"PETER PORCUPINE"

By J. GILLRAY

The more interesting of these was Preston, especially in view of the fact that Preston was actually worse off after Reform than it had been in the bad old days. Analysing the effects of the First Reform Act, Molesworth noted that it

greatly impaired the direct influence of the working classes in the elections, by diminishing the number of the Franchisers in Preston "where previously the suffrage was nearly universal." In fact, it was said that there was nothing before 1783 to hinder "a regiment of soldiers from marching into Preston one night and voting at an election the next morning." Cobbett noted that the Members for Andover :

are chosen by the Corporation. One of the Corporation, an attorney named Etwall, is a Commissioner of the Lottery or something in that way. It would be a curious thing to ascertain how large a portion of the "public services" is performed by the voters in Boroughs and their relations. These persons are singularly kind to the nation. They not only choose a large part of the "representatives of the people" but they come, in person or by deputy, and perform a very considerable part of the "public services." I should like to know how many of these are employed about the Salt Tax, for instance. A list of these public-spirited persons might be produced to show the benefit of the Boroughs.

Freemen Boroughs were those where originally all freemen who were householders could vote. But much depended on the interpretation of "Freeman." The best definition in olden times was that of a man who was a householder and recognised and punctually performed the duties of a member of a community "obeying the Curfew Bell, keeping watch and ward and bearing the burden of Municipal life." But the elector in one of these Boroughs was a very different person indeed at later times. It was no longer necessary, at least in some Boroughs, that he should be a householder, though this was not the case in all these Boroughs. It is necessary to bear in mind the absence of uniformity in days when communications were bad and each Borough was to some extent a law to itself. For instance, in some so-called Freemen Boroughs, certain local qualifications were introduced and those who could not claim such qualifications were cut out. This was specially the case in towns where Trade Guilds were strongly entrenched and the result of this, in a place

like Carlisle, for instance, was the very absurd one that clergymen, lawyers, doctors and bankers were excluded on the ground that they did not belong to Trade Guilds. The only way in which they could secure the Franchise was by coming to an understanding with the Guilds and being elected Honorary Freemen. It will be seen therefore that the word "Freeman" suffered a complete change of meaning as time went on in place of the old one which had marked the distinction between Free and Bond and the special connection between Freemen and Guild members had been established, a connection realised to this day when distinguished persons are admitted to the Freedom of cities and towns. But over a long period after the middle of the 17th century the term became more and more a political one. But Freemen Boroughs had different points of view. Some made it their aim to keep down the number of Freemen while others found the power of making Honorary Freemen useful at election times. Some places insisted that non-resident candidates should, if elected, become Freemen. It was often the rule that no candidate should be allowed to proceed until he had paid tribute and become a Freeman. As time went on it became quite common for territorial magnates to secure admission to the freedom of neighbouring towns and cities in order to be able to exercise influence on local politics. Sometimes as many as 500 non-resident Freemen would be made when an election was at hand. It was reported to the House of Commons that on the eve of the first Parliament of James II :

The Mayor and Aldermen of Hertford did arbitrarily make great numbers of persons who were neither inhabitants of the said Borough or parishes, Freemen or Free Burgesses, who polled at that election and again for the first Parliament of William and Mary.

The scandal of the making of Freemen, often on the eve of an election, was unchecked until 1762, when there took place an election for the City of Durham, at which 215

Freemen, mostly non-resident, were made Freemen after the date of the writ. There followed a disputed election and the resident Freemen petitioned against this invasion by non-residents. The House of Commons accepted this protest, the member elected was unseated and a new Act was passed, known as the Durham Act, which took away the right to vote from Honorary Freemen who had been admitted within twelve months of the first day of the election. None the less, it continued to be the rule to use the power of making Freemen for political uses.

It may be asked how the introduction of a few hundred Freemen could sway an election with any certainty on one side or the other, but it is necessary to remember how small was the number of qualified voters compared with the more than 30,000,000 of today. Thus, at Bedford, in 1769, where there were only 540 householders, 500 Freemen were made, "most of them strangers and foreigners who never served any corporate office, nor exercised any trade, nor contributed to any rate, but were made for the sole purpose of voting at elections for Members of Parliament."

It must not be thought that people were unaware of the state of things in regard to Borough elections long before anything was done on a sufficiently large scale to bring about reforms aimed at giving to the people of the country a real right of returning their representatives to Parliament. Long before the French Revolution had sent its ripples across the Channel and produced a state of things in this country in which it became a question between revolution and reform, people in and out of Parliament had been drawing attention to the scandal. Complaints that the common people were being defrauded of their rights of a free election began as far back as the 15th century. Cromwell attempted reform, but people, for the most part, seem to have gone on telling each other that there was something wrong without being quite sure where the trouble lay. Evidently it was a

topic of the years directly after the Restoration, since we find Pepys, at dinner, having

A good deal of good discourse about Parliament, their number being uncertain, and always at the will of the King to increase, as he saw reason to elect a new Borough. But all concluded, the bane of the Parliament hath been the leaving off of the old custom of the places allowing wages to those that serve them in Parliament by which they choose men that understood their business, and would attend to it, and then could expect an account but now they cannot.

Perhaps he was looking back to the time when Manu-captors had to see that the elected attended Parliament. Just a century later, the question of Reform came up in the Commons, but the elder Pitt denounced any attempt to tamper with the Constitution at such a moment :

Shall we employ ourselves in framing Bills to guard our liberties from corruption when we are in danger of losing them, and everything else that is dear to us by the force of arms ? . . . No County, nor City, nor Corporation, have requested their representatives to bring in any such Bills ; the people are everywhere engaged in making subscriptions and forming associations for defending their Sovereign and themselves against those who are traitorously conspired to rob him of his Crown and them of their liberties.

No one dared to point out, apparently, that the Counties and the Corporations were very little likely to ask their representatives to cut off the golden tide which flowed through the Kingdom. But four years later, in 1770, he expressed himself differently :

There is an idea in some that the Colonies are virtually represented in this House. I would fain know by whom an American is represented here ? Is he represented by any Knight of the Shire in any County in this Kingdom . . . Or will you tell him that he is represented by any representative of a Borough—a Borough which perhaps its own representatives never saw ? This is what is called the rotten part of the Constitution . . . The Boroughs of the country have, properly enough, been called the

rotten parts of the Constitution. I have lived in Cornwall and without entering into an invidious particularity, I have seen enough to justify the appellation.

And yet, even that great man, set free now from all that had been petty in his character, was not prepared at the very end of his life to deal drastically with "the rotten parts of the Constitution. Like the infirmities of the body, we must bear them with patience and submit to carry them about with us. The limb is mortified, but its amputation might be death."

NOTE.—Defoe, in his *Tour*, had a note on Borough Elections. "Taunton chooses two members of Parliament and the way of electing them is by those whom they call Potwalloners, the inhabitants, that is to say every inhabitant, whether Housekeeper or Lodger who dresses his own victuals. To make out which several inmates or lodgers will some time before the election, bring out their Pots and make Fires in the street and boil their Victuals in the sight of their Neighbours that their votes may not be called in question."

CHAPTER III

SOMETHING FOR NOTHING

OR at least for very little, so small in the 14th century and somewhat later was the popular estimate of the value of the Franchise. Who first thought of a vote as a marketable property? And who first was prepared to pay for it? Hallam and others have given the distinction to the Mayor of Westbury, who, in 1571, as already mentioned, extracted £4—worth probably more than £50 in our money—from Thomas Long for returning him member for that Borough. That “very simple man” immediately “confessed to the House that he gave to Anthony Garland, Mayor of the said town of Westbury, and one Watts of the same, £4 for his place in Parliament.”

Whereupon “an order was made that the said Garland and Watts should repay unto the said Thomas Long the £4 they had of him.” It did not unseat the member. But much earlier than that the value of a seat in the House of Commons was beginning to be appreciated. We have seen already how, in the middle of the 15th century, Jack Cade made the interference of great men in the elections an important item in his indictment and in 1467 candidates had begun to entertain Freeholders at the time of County elections.

It is easy to see how the change may have spread slowly into all parts of the country. In spite of political difficulties, the prosperity of the country was increasing and in spite of the Wars of the Roses, England was ceasing to be a number of loosely-knit communities, each with its provincial capital. Men were getting about more and news was travelling with them, while the House of Commons was asserting itself as one of the Estates of the Realm. And so people were taking keener interest in what went on in Parliament; whereas

originally members had been resident and locally well known, it was becoming worth the while of non-residents to secure election.

So election fights began to be frequent and local magnates began to manipulate the electoral machinery for their own ends. Long after, Waller looked back to a day far in the past :

Formerly when the neighbourhood desired a candidate to serve in Parliament there was a dinner and so an end ; but now it is a kind of an Empire. Some hundred years ago some Boroughs sent not ; they could get none to serve . . .

The Howard family was being very active in Norfolk by the middle of the 15th century. Thus there is a letter in the Paston Collection in which it is pointed out that :

Forasmuch as it is thought right and necessary for diverse reasons that my Lord hath as this time in the Parliament such persons as belong unto him and be of his menial servants, we heartily desire and pray that ye will give, and apply your voice unto our well-beloved . . .

And the writer goes on to name the two persons whom the Howards wished to represent them in the Commons. Norwich at that time was a busy place and evidently a turbulent one since there is record of a riot because a Sheriff was suspected of holding back a writ for election. In any case, it is obvious that failure to implement such an expression of territorial will as that just quoted would have had inconvenient results in the long run and no doubt ways and means had to be found of getting a sufficient poll for the Howard candidates.

When we get on into the 17th century evidence of bribery and corruption increases, together with the manipulation of elections, until in 1696 things had reached such a pass that John Evelyn expressed his disgust at the way in which the representatives of the people were chosen. Writing to Godolphin on the general corruption of the age, he voiced the feelings of the old country gentry in denouncing the

Confused, debauched and riotous manner of electing members qualified to become the representatives of a nation with legislative power to dispose of the fate of kingdoms which should and would be composed of worthy persons of known integrity and ability in their respective countries and still would serve them generously and as their ancestors have done but are not able to fling away a son's or daughter's portion to bribe the votes of a drunken multitude, more resembling a pagan bacchanalia than an assembly of Christians and sober men, met for the most solemn occasion that can concern a people, and stand in competition with some rich scrivener, brewer, banker or men in some gainful office whose face and name perhaps they never saw or knew before.

In fact, the Wars of the Roses, Henry VIII's "new men," and the Civil War had transformed the situation, together with the increased commerce of the nation. We get some light on the 17th century townsman's view on elections. There is now no longer the old apathy; what upset the electors was lack of opposition which, as Roger North wrote, "was a disgust to the common people for they wanted a competition to make the money fly." Thus, when the future Lord Keeper Guilford stood for Norwich in the sixteen seventies and there was no opposition, the people were much annoyed because his Party decided to "take but one house and there to allow scope for all taps to run." They were much better pleased at a later election when notice was given that "Sir Simon Taylor, a wealthy merchant of wine in that town, stood and had produced a butt of sherry, which butt of sherry was a potent adversary."

But the greatest difficulty was to put off the numerous suitors for houses to draw drink of which everyone made friends to insinuate in their favour as if the whole interest of the town depended upon it. But these gentlemen plenipos (Guilford's agents) determined to take no other house but where they were to let the quill as well as the tap run freely, which made an account of about £300.

This election is worth quoting also for what was nearly an unique ending

After the election and poll closed, all the chiefs on both sides met to view the poll books ; and Sir Simon Taylor, being on his own knowledge of the people's names satisfied that the election was against him, called for the indenture and signed it with the rest. This was an act of generous integrity scarce ever heard of before or since.

It was in this 17th century that, with a growing appetite for the vote and the corresponding willingness to pay for votes, various ingenious ideas were worked out which made havoc of the Act of 1430 for restricting the county vote to forty-shilling Freeholders. Thus it was in the first thirty years of the century that the faggot voter was invented and once this had been done there was a great multiplication of electors by splitting up freeholds, though this is supposed to have reached its climax in the last quarter of the 19th century when votes were being claimed, in 1877, by right of a thirteen-hundredth part of a sixpenny freehold. What happened was that so-called faggot voters were manufactured by making conveyances on which votes could be claimed on the eve of an election, though the people who received them did not know where the lands contained in them lay nor, apparently, wished to know.

It must not be thought, however, that all 17th century elections set all taps running, in Roger North's phrase, for there is on record the account of a certain John Harrington, who sat for Bath in the middle of the century. Here it is as set forth by himself :

December 26th.—Went to Bathe and dined with the Mayor and citizens and conferred about my election to serve in Parliament, as my father was helpless and ill able to go any more ; went to the George Inn at night, met the Bailiffs, and desired to be dismissed from serving ; drank strong beer and metheglin ; expended about 4s. ; went home late but could not get excused, as they entertained a good opinion of my father.

December 30th.—Went to Bathe. Met Sir John Horner ; we were chosen by the citizens to serve for the city. The Mayor and citizens

conferred about Parliament business. The Mayor promised Sir John Horner and myself a horse apiece when we went to London to the Parliament, which we accepted of.

December 31st.—Went to Bathc. Dined at the George Inn with the Mayor and four citizens ; spent 6s. in wine, laid out in victuals at the George Inn 11s. 4d. ; laid out in drinking 7s. 2d. ; paid out in tobacco and drinking vessels 4s. 4d.

January 1st.—My father gave me £4 to bear out my expenses at Bathc.

From the point of view of the thirsty citizens this must have been a very unsatisfactory election.

The 17th century was almost continuously controversial, and it is not surprising that elections were rarely as quiet as that at Bath. Thus, in 1639, we hear of much heat and tumult at the election. At the County election for Essex, for instance :

The Earl of Warwick made good use of his Lord Lieutenancy by sending out letters to the Captains of the Train Bands who, having power to charge the people with arms durst not offend, which brought many to his side . . . A man having but 40s. a year freehold hath as great a voice in the election as any ; and yet this man is never a subsidy man and therefore no way concerned in the election for his own particular ; and when the statute was made, in 1430, 40s., it was then £20 in value now. And it were a great quiet to the State if it were reduced to that and then gentlemen would be looked upon, and it would save the Ministers a great deal of pains, in preaching from their own churches.

The Sheriff was a very important person over centuries at election time. Until the 19th century, when the despatch of the writ was put into the hands of the Postmaster-General, there were various manipulations in its delivery and when it did come, sometimes one Party had first possession of it and so was able to make preparations early and sometimes the Sheriff himself indulged in sharp practice. Evelyn mentions a curious case in April, 1685 :

This day (April 8th) my brother at Wotton and Mr. Onslow were candidates for Surrey against Sir Adam Brown and my cousin Sir Edward Evelyn, and were circumvented in their election by a trick of the Sheriff's taking advantage of my brother's Party going out of the small village of Leatherhead to seek shelter and lodging, the afternoone being tempestuous, proceeding to the Election when they had gone ; they expecting the next morning ; whereas before and then they exceeded the other Party by many hundreds, as I am assured. The Duke of Norfolk led Sir Edward Evelyn's and Sir Adam Brown's Party. But the country would choose my brother whether he would or no and he missed it by the trick above mentioned. Sir Adam Brown was so deafe that he could not heare one word.

It was this Parliament of 1685 which Evelyn denounced as including "very meane and slight persons (some of them gentlemen's servants, clearkes and persons neither of reputation nor interest)." It is clear, therefore, that both intimidation and trickery and "treating" on a large scale were beginning to be prevalent in the 17th century and, as far as one man can be saddled with the credit of corrupting the once Free and Independent Elector, the time has come to celebrate some of the achievements of "Lying" Tom Wharton, who was probably the most complete and unashamed manipulator of votes in that century. He was a violent Whig and in the election of 1685 it was the object of the Tory or Court Party to unseat him. With Lord Chief Justice Jeffreys in charge of the Tory interest what was thought to be an infallible plan was concerted. Macaulay tells the story :

It was given out that the polling would take place at Aylesbury, and Wharton, whose skill in all the arts of electioneering was unrivalled, made his arrangements on that supposition. At a moment's warning the Sheriff adjourned the poll to Newport Pagnell. Wharton and his friends hurried thither, and found that Hacket (the Tory candidate), who was in the secret, had already secured every inn and lodging. The Whig Freeholders were compelled to tie their horses to the hedges, and to sleep

under the open sky in the meadows which surround the little town. It was with the greatest difficulty that refreshments could be procured at such short notice for so large a number of men and beasts, though Wharton who was utterly regardless of money when his ambition and Party spirit were roused, disbursed £1,500 in one day, an immense outlay for those times. Injustice seems, however, to have animated the courage of the stout-hearted yeoman of Bucks. . . . Not only was Wharton at the head of the poll ; but he was able to spare his second votes to a man of moderate opinion and to throw out the Chief Justice's candidate.

Wharton's politics governed his life and everything he had, even to his racing stud, was pressed into the service :

He had the finest stud in England ; and his delight was to win the plates from Tories. Sometimes when, in a distant county, it was fully expected that the horse of a High Church Squire would be first on the course, down came, on the very eve of the race, Wharton's Careless, who had ceased to run at Newmarket merely for want of competitors or Wharton's Gelding for whom Louis XIV had in vain offered a thousand pistoles . . . Such a master of the art of electioneering England had never seen. Buckinghamshire was his own special province ; and there he ruled without a rival. But he extended his care over the Whig interest in Yorkshire, Cumberland, Westmorland, Wiltshire. Sometimes twenty, sometimes thirty, members of Parliament were named by him . . . It was commonly believed that, in the course of his life, he expended on his Parliamentary interests not less than £80,000, a sum which, when compared with the value of estates, must be considered as equivalent to more than £300,000 in our time.

But it was by no means only by bribery that Wharton secured his pre-eminent position with the electorate. He was the first and perhaps the greatest master of the difficult art of canvassing :

His opponents were confounded by the strength of his memory and the affability of his deportment, and owned that it was impossible to contend against a great man who called the shoemaker by his Christian

name, who was sure that the butcher's daughter must be growing a fine girl, and who was anxious to know whether the blacksmith's youngest boy was breeched.

And it was by no means only among the common people that he practised his arts for he was as assiduous a canvasser about the Court as in the country town :

He had an eye on every boy of quality who came of age ; and it was not easy for such a boy to resist the arts of a noble, eloquent, and wealthy flatterer who united juvenile vivacity to profound art and long experience of the gay world. It mattered not what the novice preferred, gallantry or field sports, the dice box or the bottle. Wharton soon found out the master passion, offered sympathy, advice, assistance, and, while seeming to be only the minister of his disciple's pleasures, made sure of the disciple's vote.

The question of election expenses became important in the 17th century. They were at first very small, and the payment of members, no great charge when spread over considerable numbers of constituents though, as we have seen, often resented, was not a heavy local tax. Election expenses continued small as long as elections took place in the County Court but, as time went on and the Sheriffs were ordered by Statute to have elections held in Cities and Boroughs, these expenses began to increase as eagerness to sit in Parliament and the interest of the electors grew. Until nearly the end of the 17th century the returning officer need only be present at the poll and ready to take and count the votes of electors ; he did not have to spend any money in providing a polling place, hustings or poll-clerks.

By degrees, however, officials did begin to make charges against the candidates. It is easy to see how this came about as the custom of bribery of the electors grew and increased. Returning Officers saw the flood of gold at election time, "all taps running," and guineas plentiful with candidates no longer asking for wages or expenses and they said to them-

selves that they would not be the only people who did not benefit. And if candidates were so eager to get into Parliament that money was no object, then they could well afford to pay handsome fees for the small amount of labour involved. Attempts were being made to keep these charges within bounds. An abortive Bill of 1679 fixed the Sheriff's fee at a modest half-crown in order "to prevent exactions, extortions, and briberies, under the pretence of gratuities, presents or recompense." It may be guessed, for instance, that the trick played by the Sheriff of Bucks., or by the Sheriff of Surrey, mentioned earlier in this chapter, to give an unfair advantage to one set of candidates over the other, was not left unrecompensed.



View of the Hustings in Covent Garden, Westminster Election, 1806.

By J. GILLRAY

In 1688, Lord Shaftesbury drew up an ambitious scheme of reform containing many ideas which have only come to fruition within present memory. He held that official election expenses should fall on the public and that parishes and

counties should bear the election costs as when the constituencies paid both members' wages and travelling expenses. In his opinion, no official expenses should fall on the candidate, but that "a limited allowance to be made for the expense of the day, which is to be in parishes at the parish charge and in the county town at the expense of the county." Apparently Parliament, before 1712, however, while giving directions which sometimes involved expense, did not state by whom the expense was to be met. For instance, in the Parliament of 1695-96 it was decided that county elections were to be held "at the most public and usual place," and where the same has been most usually been for forty years past." The Sheriff also was to find poll clerks as he thought necessary "for the more due and orderly proceedings at the poll," but nothing was laid down about the payment of the costs of these arrangements.

Sometimes the Sheriff seems to have held a preliminary meeting with the candidate and his agent to agree on the conduct of the poll. Sir Thomas Browne, after the Norfolk election of 1679, wrote :

I never observed so great a number of people who came to give their voices ; but all was civilly carried at the poll ; and I do not hear of any rude or unhandsome carriage, the competitors having a week before set down rules and agreed upon articles for their regular and quiet proceedings.

Judging from reports of what happened at elections a few years later this was an exceptional case.

The 17th century seems also to have seen the beginnings of that most important functionary at elections, the candidates' agent. Sir Henry Slingsby's Diary shows that a land steward was his agent in an election of 1640, and some years later, Henry Sydney had an agent at Bramber. From these small beginnings have emerged the most indispensable factors of a modern election, for an agent can win or lose an election.

CHAPTER IV

CROWN AND ELECTORS

WITH controversies between Crown and Elected we are not here concerned ; our business is with the relations between the Crown and the Electors. At various times in our history the Sovereign has tried to interfere with the independence of the Parliamentary elector and it has been said sometimes that the chief weapon at the disposal of the Crown was that of the Municipal Charter. It must be remembered, however, that, as Merewether and Stephens declare with great emphasis, it was not through Royal Charters alone that the right to send members to Parliament was secured, but it was by reviving the ancient or prescriptive claim of Boroughs to be represented in Parliament, a right which had sometimes fallen into disuse, that Court influence was often employed. This lapse of the right to elect is illustrated in the 15th century by the Paston Letters. Sir John Paston, wishing to be one of the members for Maldon, seems to have been doubtful of success since his brother wrote to him :

If ye miss to be Burgess of Maldon and My Lord Chancellor will, ye may be in another place. There be a dozen towns in England which choose no Burgesses which ought to do and ye may be set in for one of those towns and ye be friended.

This makes it clear that nomination Boroughs might be had by those in favour at Court in the 15th century as well as later.

In the seventh year of Henry IV we find him taking notice of complaints from the country that elections were taking place in the counties by small numbers of electors, and he therefore ordained that "proclamation is to be made to the full county" of pending elections :

And that all they that be there present . . . shall attend to the election of the Knights and there in full county they shall proceed to the election fairly and indifferently . . . and after they be chosen the names of the persons so chosen, be they present or absent, shall be written in the indenture under the seals of all that did choose them.

This suggests a desire for fair and democratic elections, but things do not always seem to have been carried out in this way. Thus, in the writ of summons of the fifth year of Henry IV, was included the famous clause excluding the lawyers; the reason suggested being that the King and his advisers feared that lawyers might influence the Commons against granting him the subsidies he needed. Speed called this the "Lack Learning Parliament," and Coke declared that "the prohibition that no apprentice or man following the law should be chosen made the Parliament fruitless and never a good law passed."

If we look to the middle of the 15th century there is evidence also that freedom of elections is sometimes a mockery and that persons very near the King did interfere. Thus, in 1455, we find in the *Paston Letters*, John de Vere, Earl of Oxford, informing the Paston of the period that Richard Plantagenet, Duke of York, and John Mowbray, Duke of Norfolk, had met at Bury and that an agent of the Duke of York had taken to a yeoman of Paston's a schedule of the Duke's intention that certain named persons should be Knights of the Shire for Norfolk.

Speaking generally, the 15th century was a period of growing influence in Parliament and, consequently, of a growing desire among the nobles to influence elections to the Commons and of people generally to take part in elections. Kings like Henry IV, Edward IV and Henry VII were anxious to obtain from Parliament recognition of their claims to the Crown so that the elections took on an added interest.

When we come to the Tudor period the process is carried

further, though there is some difference among the authorities. Merewether records that, in the early part of Henry VIII's reign "the acquiescence of Parliament in the strong measures taken by the Crown" suggested that neither the King nor the leading men of the country found it necessary to take any special measures to influence the electors. But Brewer in his *Reign of Henry VIII* could find no ground for imagining that the Parliaments of the middle period differed much from any other time and assumed that "the choice of the electors was still determined by the King or his powerful Ministers." In any case, there is no doubt that, as time went on, Henry VIII did interfere actively in elections. We know, for instance, that he wrote to the Burgesses of Colchester instructing them to return to Parliament a person whom he named. This seems to have happened more than once, for once, at least, the Burgesses asked to be excused, pleading their duty to the country at large. Eventually, however, they gave in, which it may be supposed was what generally happened in such cases.

Edward VI was made to address the electors in sufficiently clear language :

Our Royal pleasure is that while our Privy Council or any of them within their jurisdiction in our behalf shall recommend men of learning and wisdom, in such case their decisions shall be regarded and followed as tending to the same which we desire, that is to have this Assembly of the most chiefest men of our Realm for advice and good counsel.

And his sister, Mary, followed this up with letters instructing the electors to return members "of their inhabitants as the laws require and of the wise, grave and Catholic sorts ; such as indeed being the true honour of God with the prosperity of the Commonwealth."

After her marriage with Philip of Spain and in the growing unpopularity of her measures, there were tales of Spanish gold being used to bribe the elected and of the multiplying of Charters with the right of election. But

Merewether pleads that it is due to the Crown to say that "this unconstitutional interference with the right of election is not so directly effected by the acts of the Sovereigns who granted Charters of this description for they rarely interfered directly with the rights of election," and he lays the blame on "those who were desirous for their own interests of perverting the Charters . . ."

Queen Elizabeth was active in the matter of granting Charters, of obtaining members for the first time from Boroughs long before incorporated and restoring to Boroughs a franchise long disused. Queenborough had had its Charter in 1368 but began to send members to Parliament in 1571. D'Ewes mentions that in 1562 members were restored to "Tregoney, St. Jermynes and to St. Mawes, in Cornwall, and to Minehead, Tamworth and Stockbridge." The Cornish Boroughs soon became a scandal. W. P. Courtney, writing of the *Parliamentary Representation of Cornwall*, pointed out that the elevation of petty villages into Parliamentary Boroughs :

Brought about at once the result which the Royal advisers expected. The newly-born constituencies were immediately seized upon by a swarm of greedy courtiers or expectant lawyers. From the Eastern counties and from the Northern Shires they rushed to fill the seats which had been made for them. Every hanger-on in the chambers of the Royal Palace who could contrive to obtain a mandate of election from one of the Queen's Ministers and every student of Gray's Inn who could ingratiate himself with the legal advisers of the State, sought election from these subservient constituencies and then repaired to Westminster to render that support which had been stipulated for.

In 1584, we have an order sent down to Gatton to the effect that, Francis Bacon, having been elected for another Borough as well as theirs, the electors should return in his place the person named in the letter. In 1586 a circular letter from Windsor made known the Queen's wish that :

We think that they will do very well to nominate in their free elections

those whom they elected before unless they be dead or otherwise employed in Her Majesty's service beyond the seas.

A strange kind of free election !

James I often wrote wisely and acted foolishly, and some of his admonitions to electors were sensible enough, as when he told them "to avoid the choice of any person either noted for their superstitious blindness, or for their turbulent humours other ways." And he cautioned electors against the dangers of nepotism, He also instructed Sheriffs not to direct any precept to ancient towns in their counties "being so utterly ruined and decayed that there are not sufficient residents to make such choice and of whom lawful elections may be made." But, though he did refuse to enfranchise the County of Durham till room could be made by extinguishing some rotten Boroughs, he did little practical work for Reform, and it was in his reign that men began to murmur against managers of elections as "undertakers," and it was even said in the House that "some one great man had, by letters, procured sixty voices." Actually, James' Borough management does not seem to have been practically successful, for he was generally on bad terms with his Parliaments.

We need not linger over the fate of his successor who managed still worse. He did bring back into Parliament fourteen Boroughs in a few years but it seems doubtful whether Parliament was not quite ready to join in this as a means of strengthening their forces against him. He and Strafford shared a hatred of lawyers. "I disdain," wrote the Minister to Laud, "to see the gown-men hang their noses over the flowers of the Crown and blow and snuffle upon them till they take both scent and beauty off them." One of the tricks of the Crown was to nominate men especially odious to the King for positions which excluded them from sitting in the Commons, but this in no way frightened the Opposition and no attempts to pack the House of Commons availed.

One of those curious characters we encounter in politics was a certain James Bagge, who became manager of elections under the Duke of Buckingham. He owed his importance in the West to the fact that he could influence the billeting of soldiers, Admiralty contracts, and Ecclesiastical appointments. Moreover, if a man were in prison and ready and willing to do as he was told, Bagge could get him out. He even boasted of having made one Peer. But all Charles' plans ended miserably on the scaffold.

Of Charles II, Hume wrote that, in his reign, for perhaps the first time in England since the establishment of the monarchy, Parliamentary elections were carried on in a violent struggle between the Parties with the Court interesting itself in a high degree in the choice of representatives. But, beginning with what was perhaps the most subservient Parliament in history, Charles contrived to live in bitter enmity with the representatives of the people. His advisers conceived the idea of depriving Corporations of their Charters and remodelling them in such a way as to give good hope of being able to pack a Parliament subservient to the Court. The discovery of the Rye House Plot and the great surge of popular feeling against the Whigs was a useful weapon at the disposal of the Court. Verdicts favourable to the Court were everywhere obtained with ease. Macaulay instances the case of the City of London :

The Court of King's Bench pronounced that the franchises of the City of London were forfeit to the Crown. Flushed with this great victory, the Government proceeded to attack the Constitution of other Corporations which were governed by Whig officers and which had been in the habit of returning Whig members to Parliament. Borough after Borough was compelled to surrender its privileges ; and new Charters were granted which gave the ascendancy everywhere to the Tories.

Charles himself did not live to see the work carried out all over the country, but his brother, after some hesitation, dictated by a fear of offending France, decided to call a

Parliament. Evelyn wrote in his Diary, March 5th, 1685 :

A Parliament was now summoned and greate industry used to obtain elections which might promote the Court interest, most of the new Corporations being now by their new Charters impowered to make what returnes of members they pleased.

He goes on to tell us something about the elections :

The truth is there were many of the new members whose Elections and Returns were universally censured, many of them being persons of no condition or interest in the Nation, or places for which they serve, especially in Devon, Cornwall, Norfolk, etc., said to have been recommended by the Court and from the effect of the new Charters changing the Electors. It was reported that Lord Bath carried down with him into Cornwall no fewer than fifteen Charters, so that some called him the Prince Elector.

Roger North underlines Evelyn's complaint of the lack of any real connection between members and their constituencies at that time.

I had the opportunity to be elected for the Borough of Dunwich to serve in the Parliament first summoned by King James after his accession to the Crown. It was the interest of the neighbouring gentlemen that chose me and not my own who never was nor intend to be at the place. But I thought some small sums must be spent among a few poor people there. So I gave £10 at Christmas to the poor for divers years and even after I was discarded the Parliament. And this I thought better than to present them with a week's guzzling and drunkenness.

Of the King's personal interest in the details of elections there is curious evidence from Sir John Reresby, Governor of York. Not long before King James' abdication, he went down to Windsor to take the King's commands about standing for York, for which he had been returned in 1685. He had notified York that he intended to stand again but "found the magistracy would be for the most part against me, though I had good encouragement from the other citizens." He describes, in his *Memoirs*, his state of mind :

I was not desirous to be of this Parliament, not only because I was

grown infirm and almost unfit to attend the duties of the House, but also because I was afraid the King would expect more from me than my conscience would extend to, for, as I was determined not to violate this on the one side, I could hardly resolve to offend so good a master on the other.

So to Windsor he went, putting his position clearly before the King and asking for comments and commands :

- (1) Whether seeing the contest was likely to be both chargeable and difficult, and the success extremely doubtful, it was his pleasure that I should stand. He replied positively I should.
- (2) Whether as the Opposition was very strong against me he would impute it to my remissness if I miscarried. He promised he would not.
- (3) Whether he would assist me all he could to prevent my being baffled and particularly by such means as I should propose to him. His answer was yes, and he gave immediate orders to the Lords for the Purging of Corporations to make whatever change or alteration I desired in the City of York, and to put in or out—which the King it seems had reserved to himself by the last Charter—just as I pleased.

For three-quarters of a century there is little evidence of any personal electioneering by the Sovereign, unless we include the Royal Progress through the Country by William III when the election of 1695 was going on. Queen Anne seems to have acted more or less as a modern Sovereign would in keeping aloof from the actual business of electioneering. George I was always more "King" of Hanover than of England. George II took more interest in elections, but except when his "own" Borough of Windsor was in question, he did not interfere personally, leaving the management of the elections to his Ministers. George III began his operations very early by choosing the members for the Duchy of Cornwall Boroughs, and it was said of him that there was no more astute election agent in the country. His letters to Lord North are full of directions, advice and

instruction. There was the Westminster election of 1774, when he was determined that Lord Percy should stand. Lord Percy hesitated, but the King insisted that his Minister should press the Duke of Northumberland to nominate his son, adding that Lord Mahon, the chief candidate on the other side, "cannot be a very formidable opposer as he will not open the houses." What followed may be judged by the petition lodged after the Election against the return of Lord Percy and his fellow candidate, in which it was alleged that :

The King's menial servants, not having proper houses of their own within the City of Westminster, gave voices in the said election, contrary to an expressed resolution of the House ; that Peers and Lords unduly interfered and tampered with the voters ; and that Lord Percy and Lord T. P. Clinton, by themselves or agents, were guilty of bribing, corrupting, and entertaining the voters, and that they allowed to the electors, and several persons who had or claimed the right to vote, money, meat, drink, entertainment or provision.

The King cared for none of these things, and here is an extract from only one out of a long series of notes he sent to Lord North during the election :

I desire you will regularly acquaint me with the returns of the election as they come to your knowledge. I have apprized Lord Delaware to have the Horse and Grenadier Guards privately spoke to for their votes in favour of Lord Percy and Lord Thomas Clinton, they have a large number of votes.

He condemned unsparingly any who hesitated to stand in the Court interest. For the election of 1780 he made provision in advance by putting aside £1,000 a month to create a fund, while Parliament and the country wondered how so frugal a monarch could have incurred the debt which was disclosed eventually. By the time it was wanted his election fund stood at no less than £20,000. But it was not only on the large scale that his electioneering was conducted. Like his grandfather, he considered the Royal Borough of Windsor to be his private preserve and he was determined

to keep Admiral Keppel out if possible. A certain Mr. Fowney was to stand against Keppel, and the King wrote, "I shall get my tradesmen to appear for him. I shall order the houses I rent at Windsor to stand in the parish rate in different names as my servants so that it will create six votes." The King's personal part consisted in walking about the Borough and "encouraging" the tradesmen by such simple artifices as "the Queen wants a dress. No Keppel, no Keppel." There was also the notorious "King's Friends" who were at his disposal. The title was one they gave to themselves, drawing from Junius the biting comment, "As if the body of the people were the King's enemies." These were not people of whom the King could ever have made personal friends; they were men of a type which he regarded with horror and reprobation. But they made themselves useful at election time and were willing to undertake anything on condition that they were allowed to fill their pockets, to sit for rotten Boroughs and to amuse themselves and earn the Royal gratitude by betraying and thwarting the King's Ministers or those whom, as the King thought, had been forced upon him.

Latterly, the King's active interference became more rare and eventually ceased and with it ceased the interference of the Crown in the conduct of elections. Elections continued to be corrupt after the King's death, but it was the Treasury rather than the Court which undertook election management. George IV did not interfere and William IV preferred lecturing Bishops on their personal duty to vote as he wished to any commerce with the ordinary Elector. Queen Victoria, though she did not always succeed in hiding her political preferences, never interfered at election time and no modern Sovereign would think of associating his Queen's need of a new dress with the representation in Parliament of the Royal Borough of Windsor, even if Windsor still returned a member as a Borough.

CHAPTER V

THE ELECTORAL WOMAN

BUT, it may be objected, woman as a Parliamentary elector, has the shortest of history and belongs entirely to the present century. Actually, this is not the case; in the Burgage Boroughs a woman who held a Burgage could vote by proxy, inasmuch as she could transfer her franchise right to her husband, a son or even more distant relations. Widows owning a Burgage could sell the right to vote, in some cases, for as much as £100. Even after 1832, widows and daughters of Freemen in some places received presents from Parliamentary candidates, a privilege lost in the Reform of the Municipal Corporations in 1835, and there were many cases of women possessing Pocket Boroughs.

Of these, one of the most famous was Anne, Countess of Dorset, Pembroke and Montgomery, born in 1590 and dying in her eighty-sixth year. She was twice married, first to the Earl of Dorset and secondly to the Earl of Pembroke and Montgomery. She herself was the only surviving child of the third Earl of Cumberland and owned wide lands in her own right. Both her marriages were unhappy, for she wrote of her husbands :

In both their life times the marble pillars of Knowle in Kent and of Wilton in Wiltshire were to me often times but the gay harbours of anguish in as much as a wise man who knew the insides of my fortune would often say that I lived in both these my Lords' great families as the river of Roan or Rodanus runs through the lake of Geneva without mingling any part of its waters with the lake; but I gave myself wholly to retirement as much as I could in these two great families and made good books and virtuous thoughts my companions.

In a long widowhood she devoted much of her energy to

building. Between the death of her second husband in 1650 and her own in 1676 she lived on the wide lands which had reverted to her in the North in 1643, rebuilding or restoring her six Castles of Skipton, Appleby, Brougham, Brough, Pendragon and Bardon Tower, besides many churches and almshouses. She retained complete control of her Pocket Borough of Appleby and when the Secretary of State ventured to suggest a candidate of his own for the seat, she defied him :

I have been bullied by an usurper, I have been neglected by the Court, but I will not be dictated to by a subject. Your man shan't stand !

The story rests on the authority of Horace Walpole and it is true that Marplot research has thrown considerable doubt on its authenticity, but it is emphatically a tale which ought to be true, even if it is not.

Notable among great Whig ladies of the 17th century was Rachel Russell, wife and widow of the martyred Lord William Russell, of a house singularly consistent in its political faith over more than one century, one of whose members was to be responsible for the first Reform Act. Macaulay paid a notable tribute to Lady Russell when, in describing the reversal of Russell's attainder after the Revolution, he wrote of :

The union of womanly tenderness and angelic patience in her who had been dearest to the brave sufferer, who had sat, with the pen in her hand by his side at the Bar, who had cheered the gloom of his cell, and who, on his last day, had shared with him the memorials of the great sacrifice . . .

It was natural that such a woman should be called upon to take part in Whig councils though, devoted as she was to the ideals of her Party, it would not have been possible to imagine her playing the part of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, a century later. In the year 1695 it seemed likely that two Tories might be returned to Parliament for Middle-

sex. The Whig Party managers appealed to Lady Russell. There was as yet no law against the return of minors ; her eldest son was only fifteen, but they begged her to allow him to stand ; there would be no expense ; his name would suffice ; there would be no contest even. But Lady Russell stood firm. She could not allow his education to be interrupted ; his head would be turned ; and his triumph would be his undoing.

A great builder and heiress among women must have wielded a wide influence in Derbyshire ; she was the famous Bess of Hardwicke. A later case was that of Mary, Lady Fermanagh. The ancient family of Verney was established on the Claydon Estate in Bucks. at an early date. Sir John Verney was made Viscount Fermanagh in 1703 ; and his son was raised to an Earldom in 1742. The second Earl was Edmund Burke's first political sponsor and brought him into Parliament for Wendover in 1765. The Earl's niece, Mary, succeeded him to the family estates, including a wide Parliamentary patronage in gratitude for which, perhaps, Pitt raised her to the Peerage as Viscountess Fermanagh in 1792.

There died in 1849 the widow of the immensely wealthy eighth Earl of Bridgwater, who had owned estates in Middlesex, Herts., Bucks., Bedfordshire, Northamptonshire, Oxfordshire, Salop, Wiltshire, Yorkshire and Durham. In her widowhood she lived at Ashridge, and the legend was that the tenants stated their political faith in the terms, "We vote for Lady Bridgewater"—which perhaps was a diplomatic declaration in view of what happened on the estates owned by Frances Ann Vane Tempest, Lady Londonderry, at the election of 1837, in which, by a circular signed by herself and her husband, she instructed the tenants how to vote.

We assure all these who answer to the solemn appeal that we make to them—who step forward with heart and soul in the Conservative cause

to rescue the country from Radical domination—that the sense of obligation to us personally will be for ever registered in our memories ; and that the gratitude of ourselves and our family to those who live around us and on our property will be in proportion to this important demand we make upon them to prove their fidelity and their attachment to our sentiments and confidence in our opinions. We send these our recommendations to our esteemed friend, the Honourable Henry Liddell, to make every use of them he shall think fit ; and we have begged him especially to report to us those who answer zealously to our call, and those who are unmindful and indifferent to our earnest wishes.

Probably another lady on the opposite side of politics obtained the same results much more tactfully when she was sounded by her tenants as to her wishes at an election. She replied that, as a lifelong Liberal, she could only urge them to vote as their consciences dictated. No doubt, with that broad hint, they voted Liberal. Frances Ann, Lady Londonderry, was a favourite butt of the Whig writers of the period, but Lord Acton classed her with the Duchess-Countess of Sutherland in an indictment which denounced “these rich old ladies” as “dreadful powers in the land.” Actually, the Duchess-Countess may have been maligned. One writer at the beginning of this century described her as “an absolute despot, as fifteen thousand evicted crofters of Sutherland knew by personal experience.” But this is probably a considerable exaggeration, though controversy has not done with the subject. She was Countess of Sutherland in her own right and, as such, owned most of the County of that name. Her husband was created first Duke of Sutherland and they set to work to change the face of the County which was too poor to support its population, described as “ignorant, idle and often lawless.” In spite of much opposition in the County and from people outside, including Cobbett, they moved many peasant holders from the interior to the sea coast; building roads and bridges also and putting into cultivation large areas on which nothing of the kind had been

attempted before. A considerable literature grew up round these proceedings on both sides, but something of an acid test was provided when one of the chief agents was tried at Inverness on a charge of culpable homicide by eviction. He was acquitted and later obtained heavy damages against his chief accuser.

Another masterful Duchess was Harriet, Duchess of Sutherland, who had a powerful voice in the cause of liberty, especially in Italy. It was she who entertained Garibaldi in London and some disrespectful wag suggested that she should be married to Garibaldi. It was objected that he had a wife already. "Never mind," was the reply, "we'll put up Gladstone to explain her away."

On the Tory side, Lady Jersey was a great power and she appears as Zenobia in Disraeli's *Endymion*. Mid-Victorian women, much interested in politics, anxious to exercise what moral authority they could in the interest of their parties, were Lady Stanley of Alderley, her daughters Lady Amberley and Lady Carlisle, Lady Burdett Coutts, and Mrs. Grete.

Prime Ministers' wives have sometimes exercised a considerable influence in politics, notably Lady Palmerston, whose receptions were an important factor in a whole generation of political life. We have been told that Mrs. Gladstone, in her charitable visits to the East End, did a little quiet electioneering for her William by presenting photographs of him to the objects of her bounty.

In actual electioneering contests no woman has eclipsed the fame of Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, daughter of an Earl Spencer and so reared in the strictest sect of Whiggery. It was to her that, after reading some verses of hers, Coleridge addressed the lines :

Oh, Lady, nursed in pomp and pleasure
Where learned you that heroic measure :

Horace Walpole wrote of her with unusual enthusiasm :



THE WIT'S LAST STAKE; OR THE COBBLING VOTER AND
ABJECT CANVASSERS.
By T. ROWLANDSON

She effaces all without being a beauty, but her youthful figure and her flowing good nature, her sense and lively modesty and modest familiarity in reality make her a phenomenon.

At the time of the famous Westminster election of 1784, in which she led a platoon of ladies in the cause of Charles Fox, in spite of "the most illiberal and indecent" efforts of the Government to deter her, she went everywhere quite fearlessly, and the story of the butcher's kiss is part of political history. "She entered some of the most blackguard houses in the Longacre" undaunted by "coarse receptions."

The cartoonists were busy with these Amazons and Grub Street celebrated their exploits in verses good or bad. For instance :

Sure Heaven approved of Fox's cause
(Though slaves at Court abhor him),
To vote for Fox, then, who can pause
Since Angels canvass for him ?

Included in the ranks of her militant force was Georgiana's sister, Lady Duncannon, afterwards Countess of Bessborough, who, like the Duchess, did not hesitate to drive the common people to vote in her own chariot. The House of Stanley was represented, too, in the person of Lady Derby, daughter of the Duke of Hamilton, and the Howards contributed Lady Carlisle, who herself was a member of one of the great Whig families, for she was daughter of the first Marquess of Stafford.

Not that the Court was unrepresented in the fray. A contemporary account tells how :

An imperfect attempt was made on the hostile side to oppose this new species of warfare by similar captivation and Lady Salisbury was moved to awake the dying fortunes of the Government candidate. But the effort failed ; it was imitation, it was too late ; and the Duchess was six and twenty, and Lady Salisbury thirty-four. These are reasons enough and more than enough for the rejection of any man from the hustings.

Lady Buckinghamshire was even less successful.

This may be the place to recall how Lady Randolph Churchill emulated the Duchess a century later in the same district, though it was then very markedly less "blackguard" than in the days of Georgiana. A butcher is said to have reminded her of the kiss which the Duchess took in exchange for a vote, and Lady Randolph, who was working on behalf of the Conservative candidate, Mr. W. H. Smith, replied sweetly, "Thank you very much, I'll tell Mrs. Smith."



THE DEVONSHIRE, OR MOST APPROVED MANNER
OF SECURING VOTES, 1784.

By T. ROWLANDSON

Of sterner mould than either the Duchess or Lady Randolph, was Mrs. Wentworth Beaumont, who wielded great power in Yorkshire and bearded Lord North in Downing Street with the defiant announcement, "Are you determined to make your man stand for our seat? Very well,

I am on my way down to Yorkshire with £80,000 in my carriage for our man. Try and do better than that.

In the first half of the 19th century women's part in elections was less dramatic, but they were invaluable to candidates. When Mr. Gladstone first stood for Parliament in 1832 the tea parties for "Red Ladies" (his election colours) were a great feature. When young Monckton Milnes was standing for Pontefract he was careful to give special thanks to the "fair and generous wives and daughters" of the constituency for the manner in which they had received him. Young Gathorne Hardy, afterwards Lord Cranbrook, made special mention also of feminine support and countenance in his early contest and added that though his wife had been hesitating about coming down, "I think she would hardly be able to keep away. I almost wish she may not come, as I am sure she will be greatly excited by the contest.

Until the Home Rule split in 1886 great families on either side of politics maintained their allegiance. Cavendishes, Russells, Spencers, Grosvenors Cokes, Cecils, Nevills, Gordon Lennoxes and Percies were only a few of the families in which Party loyalty remained constant generation after generation on one side or the other. It was not necessary to ask what were the politics of a Russell or a Spencer on one side, or of a Cecil or of a Percy on the other. The women who married into these families married also into the family Party, though there is recorded a case of the daughter of a leading Tory family marrying into a Whig house, the head of which exclaimed: "That woman will undo all that we have been doing for two hundred years and will make the next generation Tory." On the other hand,

the second Duke of Westminster is reported to have asked his father whether Conservative and Liberal families ever intermarried.

When Drummond Wolff founded the Primrose League after Disraeli's death, Lady Glenesk founded the Lady's Branch with the Duchess of Marlborough as first President, and the Primrose Dames became at once a great power in the land, more especially in country districts. Lord Salisbury made gentle fun of the appellations fixed to the different officers of the League and, accepting the Office of Patron, wrote that he supposed he would have "No such commonplace name. What do you say to Vavasour?"

Of less-exalted rank but of no less enthusiasm, were the Blackburn women who, in the agitation for the First Reform Bill, set up Female Suffrage societies to help in the fight and encouraged other places to do the same.

It may be said therefore that, far back into the remote history of Parliaments, women were interesting themselves, often actively, either in returning members to Parliament or in taking part in actual election contests. Throughout the 19th century a candidate who could not mobilise a strong feminine contingent to help him in the many labours of nursing and fighting a constituency might as well not have stood at all.

As far back as 1460 a Duchess of Norfolk was instructing Sir John Paston in the matter of candidates for seats in the Howard interest and it is easy to suppose that in these days when men were overseas fighting under the King's banners, it would be left to the women to deal with the details of electioneering.

When the Charter was drafted in 1838, the first draft contained a demand for female suffrage, but it was felt at that time that such a proposal might seem chimerical and might even bring ridicule upon the many who were deeply interested. More than fifty years later, more or less similar objections seemed to have swayed Mr. Gladstone when

bringing in a Reform Bill. Meanwhile, between 1840 and 1850 some progress was being made. Two politicians with as little in common in most matters as Disraeli and Cobden were regarded as being friendly, but it was the appearance in active politics of John Stuart Mill in 1865 which really put the matter into focus as a subject demanding serious consideration. Suffrage Societies were springing up and in 1870 a Bill received a second reading in the Commons. In Parliament in 1884 a majority of members, it is said, was pledged to support the cause and Gladstone's refusal to include it in his Reform Bill on the ground that it would overweight the measure was regarded by the Suffrage leaders as a betrayal. No doubt, however, Gladstone was right, for he would first have had to carry the measure through his Cabinet.

Meanwhile, the women were working in the constituencies, learning much about the multifarious business of electioneering, speaking from platforms, canvassing. Most of them were workers on behalf of the new Labour Party and they came from all classes, so that the great developments of the present century, and especially after 1909 were really the fruit of long endeavour rather than any sudden emotional crisis.

There is nowadays a very considerable library on one side or the other of the Suffrage question for the battle was stoutly fought, but it is not the purpose of this book to give any detailed account of the labours of the Pankhursts, the Lawrences, and many more. The interest and importance of women in election contests, though different from that represented by the fine ladies who worked for Charles Fox, has gone on increasing without having the effect which Cobbett foresaw on the age and appearance of men members. What is admittedly disappointing is that the woman elector does not seem to regard her sex as represented by too few women in the House of Commons and in this respect the election of 1945 showed little improvement.

CHAPTER VI

BRIBERY AND CORRUPTION

TOWARDS the close of the 18th century, Mr. Thomas Oldfield, a careful and competent authority, declared that 99 Peers, 104 Commoners, and the Ministers for the time being, returned between them 387 members to the House of Commons, while only 171 were the representatives of Free and Independent Constituencies.

In his *Representative History of Great Britain*, in six volumes, 1816, he gave a slightly different figure. In describing the notorious case of Gatton, in Surrey, he wrote :

In this Borough the proprietor united in himself the functions of member of Parliament, magistrate, churchwarden, overseer, surveyor of highways, collector of taxes and appointed at his Court Leet the constable who was the Returning Officer. If the majority of the House of Commons was not sent to Parliament in the same way, we should think this single instance sufficient to prove the necessity of immediate reform, but when we find no less than 474 members out of the 658, sent to Parliament by private nomination and through the influence of Peers and opulent commoners, the fallacious and inadequate nature of the representation becomes too glaring for the most besotted advocate of corruption to defend.

Gatton had six houses and, at the time of the first Reform Bill, one voter. Oldfield gives various other cases not less disgraceful. There was the Borough of Castle Rising, for instance, in Norfolk. Castle Rising had once been a busy place with a good harbour and a considerable trade, but the harbour had silted up and the trade had departed. It had 46 houses, including cottages :

The few members of its Corporation were returned by two magnates, Mr. Howard and Lord Cholmondeley. Two individuals were said to

elect each other as Mayor alternately. The few electors implicitly obeyed the direction of the two partners in the return of two members.

Northamptonshire, a county containing a dozen market towns and 300 parishes, could be outvoted in Parliament by the members for two Northamptonshire villages with a combined normal constituency of about 55 voters, though their members were returned actually by the Duke of Bridgewater and Earl Fitzwilliam. It is not surprising that Oldfield quoted with honest indignation Chatham's warning that if, in this matter, Parliament did not reform itself from within, it would find itself forcibly reformed from without.

Midhurst, in Sussex, was a Burgage Borough and the right of election there lay in a few smallholdings on which no one lived, but they were identified among the surrounding fields by a stone set up in each. All these tenures had been bought up by a single person who, for the purpose of an election, assigned them to selected servants who were to make back the property to their employer after the election. In the year 1794 the number of permanent voters at Midhurst was returned as one, electing two members. It was there, by the way, that Charles Fox began his chequered electoral experience at the age of nineteen. In 1830 there were said to be 18 electors.

In 1624 James I had pointed out that Old Sarum ought not to go on returning two members. A century and a half later it was visited by an American named Curwen, who thus wrote of it :

This spot, which in former days was the site of Old Sarum, containing about 60 acres, unless I am misinformed, without one house on it, is now entitled to send two members to Parliament. On the lower plain, and bordering on the slope, stands one house, where dwells a family supplying the curious who visit there with punch, wine and tea.

Old Sarum was once the property of Governor Pitt and had the distinction of returning his illustrious grandson to Parliament.

Governor Pitt was one of the early Nabobs as men who had made great fortunes in India were called, and when they came into the market for seats in Parliament the price of Boroughs rose to remarkable heights. Some advertised themselves in the newspapers, some employed a broker to make the best bargain they could and when army contractors were competing with territorial magnates, Nabobs and Caribbees, business was very brisk. The Mayor and Aldermen of Oxford refused in 1768 to elect any candidate who would not undertake to assist in wiping off the City's debt. Ludgershall with two seats produced £9,000 for George Selwyn. When Lord Chesterfield wanted a Borough for young Stanhope he was told that single seats were fetching £5,000 apiece. There were also the Cinque Ports and what were called Treasury Boroughs where the State employed the voters and called the tune, and in other cases the Treasury bought up Boroughs.

The Plantagenet Kings and the Tudors took measures to secure that in their Parliaments there should be blocks of members who could be relied upon to vote as instructed, so that in Cornwall and along the neighbouring coasts almost every village secured the franchise because the Royal property in mines and tallages ensured reliable members. These were generally tradesmen "whose only business it was to lay heavy taxes upon wool and leather. They did not interfere in legislation ; their sole duty was to grant money." Many of these toy Boroughs were disposed of eventually to Crown favourites and became notorious homes of corruption. A striking case was that of the Borough of Grampound. It had a Mayor, a Recorder, eight Aldermen and a Town Clerk ; as soon as the Mayor was elected he chose two Aldermen, who were called Eligers, and they nominated eleven Scot and Lot Freemen. These fourteen chose electors, bringing the number up to about 50 in all. At first the members returned belonged, as a rule, to the local families,

but in the 18th century those immediately concerned were doing pretty well out of elections and a local historian celebrated one case in which it came to the knowledge of the 50 electors that though their "patron" was getting £6,000 from the two members returned at each election, only half of it went into the pockets of the voters ; so they proceeded to put themselves up to auction with a view to obtaining a patron who would hand over all his gains.



ELECTION TROOPS BRINGING THEIR ACCOUNTS TO THE
PAY TABLE, WESTMINSTER, 1788.

By JAMES GILLRAY

At last, in 1818, the thing became a little too notorious. There were six candidates, five of whom went to the poll. It was possible and not uncommon in those days to call upon voters to take what was called the Bribery Oath, and one member of the Burgess body, described as being "as great a rogue as any of them," presented himself as a candidate in order to enforce the Bribery Oath, but was set upon by his

fellows in the street, knocked down and badly beaten. Eventually, two candidates got 36 votes each and the other three 11 each. One of the defeated candidates presented a petition and secured a conviction for bribery against some of the voters, but withdrew his petition when the Attorney for the successful candidate paid him £8,000 for his expenses. The end of it all was that the "owner" of the Borough, a certain Manasseh Lopez, was heavily fined for bribery and corruption and was sent to prison, while the Borough was disfranchised in 1821.

Foote wrote a satire which he called "The Nabob," with a comical scene in a corrupt Borough.

Mayor But, after all, Master Touchit, I am not so over-fond of these Nabobs. For my part I'd rather sell myself to somebody else.

Touchit And why so, Mr. Mayor.

Mayor I don't know. They do a mortal deal of harm in the country . . . In my opinion, it's all along of these folks that things are so scarce.

Touchit You talk like a fool. Suppose they have mounted the beef and mutton a trifle. A'n't we obliged to them too for raising the value of Boroughs? You should always set one against t'other.

Some territorial magnates managed to hold their own with the Nabobs and the Caribbees (from the West Indies), notably the first Lord Lonsdale, who nominated nine members, familiarly known as Lowther's Ninepins. His power was celebrated in the *Rolliad*:

E'en by the elements his power confessed,
Of mines and boroughs Lonsdale stands possessed;
And one sad servitude alike denotes
The slave that labours and the slave that votes.

There was something regal about his methods, as for instance, in the settlement of a colony of his Cumbrian miners in his Burgage Borough of Haslemere, in Surrey,

their only duty being that of returning the person indicated to them when an election came on.

The system of patrons really originated in the days when it was to the advantage of any Borough to have some powerful magnate through whom it could look for protection in troublous times while bridges, roads and other amenities could be secured more easily with such an advocate. On the other hand, as the value of a seat in Parliament increased, it became an object with magnates to be able to control elections, thus becoming powerful with the Ministers of the period by support in Parliament or the withholding of that support.

But even in the case of that minority of constituencies which were described by Oldfield as Free and Independent, corruption and bribery were general and notorious. Election expenses rose to fabulous heights.

I shall not quote the Eatanswill election, though here Dickens did not exaggerate and the whole episode might stand for an indictment of the bad old days. But if there is anyone who has not read his *Pickwick*, it would be a pity to spoil his enjoyment by making extracts.

For the candidates the business of electioneering began generally with a canvass which was, in fact, a synonym for bribery in many cases. Indeed, we find defeated members who were not inclined to spend large sums in bribery explaining that their ill-success was due to their having omitted to "canvass." Actually, "Mr. Most" was an essential figure of most elections and it was the candidate who was prepared to spend most freely who had the best chance of success. As a precautionary measure, promises only were given by wise candidates until the lapse of the period during which a petition could be entered.

The election itself began at the hustings, a platform set up in some conspicuous place at the expense of the candidates, whose duty it was to address the crowds, generally contain-

ing a minority of electors. But it was by no means only the actual electors who were bribed. Mobs of ruffians were hired by each of the candidates for their own protection and to drown the speeches of their rivals by vocal and other noises. Bands were generally hired. What took place was well described in the House of Commons by Bernal Osborne when the question of the ballot was being debated.

An Honourable gentleman talks about the voices of the electors as if the individual voice of an elector was ever heard at a nomination and as if there was not a general agreement to roar, to hiss and become debased with drink. The true-born Englishman is said to delight in the proceedings at nomination. Now, who are the true-born Englishmen who take part? Why, the representatives of muscular Christianity; prize-fighters and people of that sort. I have spent as much money in retaining the services of these gentry as anybody in this House. One of my most efficient supporters was a gentleman who was always clothed as a clergyman of the Church of England, but who was really a champion of England—one Bendigo.

Bendigo, it may be necessary to add for a new generation, was a famous prizefighter.

Even the approach to the hustings was often dangerous. John Cam Hobhouse, a protagonist in the struggle for Reform, was for some time one of the members for Westminster, together with the famous Sir Francis Burdett. But the fickle mob turned against Hobhouse after 1832, and here is a description from his Diary.

The moment I got into Covent Garden market the disturbance began. It was not without difficulty, not to say danger, that I got within the rails of the church portico. The people were ferocious and if they had got me down, I should never have risen again. Fearon, the American traveller, said that he was afraid that we had given more Reform than the civilisation of the people would bear. When I stepped forward to speak I was instantly assailed with the most unsavoury missiles and a storm of hisses and yells.

It was in the midst of such scenes as these and, often in dumb show, that the rival candidates were nominated by their supporters on the hustings, and there was a call for a show of hands, followed by the declaration of a poll which at one time might be open for forty days, during which the business already started was carried on. A town like Hull had a regular tariff. The price of a single vote was two guineas, for a double vote or plumper, four guineas. If it was necessary to bring down non-resident voters, £10 might be given for expenses. At Stafford the tariff was rather higher, for Sheridan paid five guineas a vote there. When Captain Gronow stood for Grimsby in 1832, he was under a promise to Lord Yarborough, who had nominated him, not to bribe. But during the contest he was approached by a man "apparently respectable and one of my best supporters," who said :

There are four persons of great influence to whom you must give £100 a-piece. If you don't come in I will engage to return the amount to you myself, but if you refuse to give the money, you are quite sure of being beaten.

Gronow explained the terms on which he had secured Lord Yarborough's influence, and he lost the election. However, he stood for Stafford a little later, where, looking out of his bedroom window at the inn on the first day of his campaign, he saw and heard a number of men cheering and clapping their pockets in a highly suggestive fashion :

I had plenty of money in those days and determined that no one should outbid me, so I set to work to bribe every man, woman and child in that ancient borough. I engaged agents, opened all the public houses not already taken by my opponent, kissed all their wives and children, drank all their healths in every sort of abominable mixtures and secured my return against great public interest.

What opening the public houses might mean may be illustrated by the bill rendered from one small pot house in Ilchester at an election for the County of Somerset :

		£	s.	d.
353 bottles rum and gin at 6s.	..	105	18	0
57 bottles French brandy at 10s. 6d.	..	29	18	6
514 gallons beer at 2s. 8d.	68	10	8
792 dinners at 2s. 6d.	99	0	0
		<hr/>		
		£303	7	2
		<hr/>		

At a Borough election in 1761, on the day of nomination, an inauguration breakfast cost £750, and during the day 980 stones of beef, 315 dozens of wine, 72 pipes of ale and 365 gallons of spirits, converted into punch, were consumed—or charged. In a Northamptonshire county election the thirsty supporters of one party drank all the port in the cellars of one historic house and had to be supplied with the noble owner's cherished claret, whereupon the disgusted mob went over to the other side, declaring that they would have nothing to do with a man who gave them "sour port." Even at Newark, when young William Ewart Gladstone made his first bow to the electors—under the patronage of the Duke of Newcastle, against whom a petition had once been entered on the ground that not only had he "done what he liked with his own," but that he had actually evicted tenants who had voted against his wishes from property state-owned and only leased to him—bills were sent in from the inns after the election for meat and liquor supplied amounting to £2,000.

It is not surprising that, with free drink everywhere, street violence was the rule rather than the exception. Gathorne Hardy described an election in the middle eighteen-thirties in Yorkshire :

At Lowmoor (near Bradford) all was pretty quiet except one night when we were soundly pelted not only with mud but with stones But on the 31st was the great battle of Wakefield, owing, as I can vouch from personal observation, to an attack from behind on the Blues

(Tories) by an organised gang with green flags. The Yellows joined in, but at first the Blues drove them both away. What broken heads, torn garments, etc., there were afterwards the journals of the day relate. My new morning frock-coat was sadly mutilated and the arms stiff with the blood of another who tried to hide his head behind me. The wounds and blood at lunch were frightful to see.

There seems to have been little rest for anyone since at a later election Hardy mentions, "We dined at Bradford and, I was going to add, slept there, but the constant row from the street was a pretty good preventive."

When it came to the business of voting there were many ruses and tricks employed. There were no proper State-compiled registers such as we have today and it happened on occasions that many more people were returned as having voted than could claim the right to do so under whatever system might be in force in any Borough or as forty-shilling Freeholders in County elections. And a sinister meaning attached to the cry "Vote early and Vote often." Parties brought forward their voters as tactical considerations suggested and it would be hoped that doubtful voters might be influenced by the securing of a long lead of any candidate in the daily reports of the numbers polled. In some cases, it was as much in the interest of a candidate to keep electors away from the poll as to get them to it. There were such crude methods as that practised on at least one occasion in York when the Whigs had a number of steers penned at a strategical point and so handled as to be half maddened ; in that state they were suddenly let loose on a procession of Tory voters. It was at York, too, that a trusted clerk of a firm, looking after the interests of one side, used to be sent to Tadcaster, the last stopping place on the old London to York coach route, liberally supplied with notes and gold. No account was ever asked from him of his disposal of the money, but it was well understood that it was his function to meet the London coaches, to ascertain, if possible, in

whose interest passengers had come to vote and to make it worth the while of opponents to return to town.

Elections for Knights of the Shire, later to be known as County elections, were fantastically dear. There was an election in Northamptonshire in 1768 in which three Earls fought for their nominee. It was county gossip that between them they spent £400,000 on this one election. These figures seem fantastic when we compare the value of money in the 18th century with that of today, but at least one of them had to shut up his house in the county and live abroad the rest of his life, it being noted in contemporary obituaries that he had been compelled by heavy election expenses to take this course. It was added that, after all this, a scrutiny showed the voting as even and that the combatants tossed a coin to determine who should sit. County elections were often waged on this spendthrift scale, however, owing to the clash of great territorial families allied by heredity or interest with one or other of the great Parties. A single pre-Reform election in Northumberland was said to have cost £190,000. Lord John Russell told the House of Commons that an uncontested election in Yorkshire might cost as much as £150,000. When William Wilberforce first stood for Yorkshire in 1784, at the wish of the great clothiers, the question arose of the expense involved in view of the fact that lavish expenditure had reduced the county "to the condition of a nomination Borough in the hands of the Whig nobility." When Sir George Savile obtained popular support for his candidature in 1780, he said, "Hitherto I have been elected in Lord Rockingham's dining room ; now I am returned by my constituents." Fortunately, Wilberforce's clothier supporters had no intention of allowing questions of expense to frighten them from the field and they paid cheerfully, through a public subscription, the expenses of Wilberforce and his fellow-candidate amounting to a comparatively small share of the £18,670 actually collected. But in the

great struggle of 1807, both sides spent money more freely than before. It was estimated that the election cost not far short of £300,000 in all. Brougham said that the committee which managed Wilberforce's election "used every resource of the most rigid economy and had great voluntary assistance and labour," this in addition to a public subscription. Apparently, his expenses were something less than £29,000.

An Oxford election in the 18th century cost £55,000. The corruption of Liverpool was notorious. In 1790, Lord Penrhyn spent nearly £30,000 only to be beaten, the actual number of voters going to the poll being 1,937. In 1830 a Liverpool election cost £80,000. We shall hear more of Liverpool elections in the next chapter.

It is not surprising that men like Wilberforce looked back with shame at the corruption in which they themselves had had to take part in order to enter Parliament. When he was first returned for Hull he spent between £8,000 and £9,000. This was in 1783-4, but in after-life he reflected that :

Had the change in my religious principles taken place sooner, humanly speaking, I never could have become member for Yorkshire. The means I took and the exertions I made in pursuing that object were such as I could not have used after my religious change ; I could not have thought it right to carve for myself so freely, if I may use the phrase (to shape my course for myself so confidently) nor should I have adopted the methods by which I ingratiated myself in the goodwill of some of my supporters ; neither after having adopted the principles I now hold, could I have conformed to the practices by which alone any man could be elected for any of the places in which I had any natural influence or connection.

There could be no severer indictment than this of a system in which candidature was impossible even for a man with local connections unless he was prepared either to accept the livery of a Borough patron or else to bribe and corrupt. The former alternative made it impossible, save only in a few exceptional cases, for a man to act with independence and retain his seat ; the second alternative too often involved

financial ruin. It may be doubted whether even the gambling habits of the 18th century ruined more families than the expenses of electioneering.

However, we may assume the election over and won ; the next ordeal was that of being chaired round the constituency, which provided further opportunities for rioting. Some elected candidates refused to face the ordeal and found someone else to go through it as their deputy. The occupant of the chair could also be called upon for a speech, but there is record of at least one occasion on which the successful candidate's son was called upon to undergo the chair ordeal and make a speech, his father pleading lumbago. "No, no," he said, "my father may have lumbago, but he hasn't got lockjaw, and if you want a speech, let him make it."

In some cases the chair used was carefully preserved and was numbered among a Borough's trophies long after the bad old days had passed away, but the evidence shows that in other cases the mob seized it as soon as it was vacated and soon reduced it to matchwood.

Often, also, there was a grander procession than that of the charring. Here, for instance, is an account of a procession round Southwark after an election :

We set out at ten and were nearly seven hours in the broiling sun, Charles (Calvert) went first in a barouche with six greys, blue satin postillions and all the horses dressed out in blue ribbons. Mrs. Charles followed next in a barouche with one of her sisters. I followed in my barouche with Mary, Harriet, and Edmond, all bedizened with blue. Numbers met us at the entrance to the Borough. Two waggons with bands of music, and a man in armour rode at the head. It was, in short, a very gay scene, and nothing could possibly go off better.

All of which, we may be sure, added considerably to the successful candidate's expenses.

CHAPTER VII

SOME FAMOUS ELECTIONS

SOME of the most curious samples of ephemeral literature to be found in the catalogues of the British Museum are concerned with elections, notable in their day, and in some cases historically important. Thus, we have thousands of words concerned with one of those costly Northumbrian contests, that of 1774. The Duke of Northumberland, one of the victims of contemporary satire, had decided that a younger son should be elected member for the County in spite of the fact that he was then notoriously in poor health and, according to the other side, unfit to enter Parliament, a charge borne out to some extent by the fact that he was represented throughout the contest by a deputy. The Duke's first object, it was alleged, was to pack a meeting for the choice of candidates and there was published a copy of a letter sent out to all his agents in these terms :

You are desired to be at the meeting at Morpeth next Tuesday forenoon and to receive there such directions from His Grace as shall be thought expedient. I shall be glad to know at what house you put up at Morpeth that you may be the more readily found.

A critical freeholder attended the meeting and his account of it gives a lively picture of the way in which such things were managed 170 years ago.

The affair was described officially as "a General Meeting of Gentlemen, Clergy and Freeholders of the County of Northumberland," and here are some extracts :

At eleven in the morning the crowd was so great about the town hall that the High Sheriff and the gentlemen attending him had the greatest difficulty to come up to it. The gates were no sooner opened than everybody rushed in with an impetuosity that made it quite unsafe for

one not endowed with strong and active faculties to venture in the midst of them. Those in the most hurry had the least business to be there, for among others I saw postillions and footmen, who I was sure were not Freeholders make a bolder and more successful rush than their betters were able to do

I could not hear much for above fifty mischievous boys had taken possession of the staircase . . .

However, he did hear one potential candidate addressing the meeting :

Sir William Middleton, having taken care to put his hands safe in his pockets and to hold up his head very straight, attempted to repeat his lesson, which unfortunately was not wrote very clearly on his memory so that we expected every moment to see him sit down in the middle of his speech . . .

I overheard a plain countryman near me say, "Well, friend Middleton, you may be an honest man but if you should not plead better for the interests of the County than you do for yourself we have little hope of preserving our privileges."

And so it went on hammer and tongs for many days, with accusation and counter-accusation, until at last the absentee son of the Duke was returned, the other side providing him with a colleague.

A lively place at election time was Norwich and when an election took place there in 1786 an enterprising printer produced what was called "The New Election Budget," printing in parallel columns the squibs, poems, declarations and denials put forth on behalf of Henry Hobart and Sir Thomas Beevor, the rival candidates. Unfortunately, the poems are too full of purely local allusions for quotation, but there is plenty of other material. Sir Thomas, being the local candidate, it was important to denigrate him at an early stage and so we lead off with this :

Being informed that some of the manufacturers in the City have threatened to turn those journeymen out of work that refuse to vote for

Sir Thomas Beevor, we, whose names are hereby subscribed, disdaining such oppressive measures and being ABLE, do promise that we will without evasion find employment for those men who are turned out if on that account, as we are determined by every FAIR means in our power to support the interest of the Hon. H. Hobart.

The other side made much play with an imaginary race meeting* in which one horse was backed by "the City's goodwill and independence" and the other by the "Borough mongers and their pimps." But at the same time Beevor's side proclaimed that :

Several abusive songs having been obtruded on the public contrary to the express orders of Sir Thomas Beevor's Committee, they think it necessary to declare that they have during the present contest refused to publish any manuscript reflecting on the personal character of individuals.

In another effort the citizens were told that orders had been issued to "the Snarling Squad to torment, perplex, affront, abuse, and ill-treat every Freeman, whether Gentleman or Journeyman, who is impudent enough to walk the streets without a blue and white waistcoat, ribband, etc."

But perhaps the best effort was a detailed account of the invasion by a mob of the house of one of Hobart's supporters and the kidnapping therefrom of "a person who had solemnly engaged his vote to the Hon. Henry Hobart." Needless to say, the other side put in sworn denials of the story.

An election of a very different kind was that for the great City of Bristol, in 1774, whence an invitation was sent to Edmund Burke to stand as a candidate without expense to himself. It was a considerable ordeal for the poll was actually kept open for a month, during the whole of which time new Freemen were being elected. But Burke was safely returned, and when it came to making his speech of thanks, Burke used language which can never be quoted too often while democracy exists :

Certainly, Gentlemen, it ought to be the happiness and glory of a representative to live in the strictest union, the closest correspondence and the most unreserved communication with his constituents. Their wishes ought to have great weight with him ; their opinions high respect ; their business unremitting attention. It is his duty to sacrifice his repose, his pleasure, his satisfactions, to theirs. And, above all, ever and in all cases, to prefer their interests to his own. But his unbiassed opinion, his mature judgment, his enlightened conscience, he ought not to sacrifice to you, to any man, or to any set of men living. Your representative owes to you not his industry only, but his judgment ; and he betrays, instead of serving you, if he sacrifices it to your opinion.

Another great trading port, Liverpool, was the scene of many lively election contests, as, for instance, in 1784, when an unfortunate citizen made himself so obnoxious to the mob whose darling, Colonel Tarleton, a brave soldier who had been wounded in the wars, was beaten, that it revenged itself with some violence :

He had his house broken to pieces ; all the windows, shutters and even iron bars were broken and they cut the window curtains with cutlasses all to bits and tore up and destroyed the palisade and wall before the house.

Perhaps the most famous of Liverpool elections was that of 1812 when Brougham and Creevey tried to oust Canning and his colleague. Creevey's announcement of his defeat was sent off to his wife before the actual close of the poll in a characteristic note :

Well, my pretty, Diddy and Brog-ham are fairly done, beat to mummy, but we are to take the chance of some miracle taking place in our favour during the night and are not to strike till eleven or twelve or one tomorrow. We had to do with artists who did not know their trade ; poor Roscoe (the Banker) made much too sanguine an estimate of our strength.

The election had another interesting feature for at the house of one of Liverpool's strongest Tories, John Gladstone,

a little boy was stood on a chair before Canning and "addressed the House." This was William Ewart Gladstone, not yet three years old. Another feature of this election was Canning's stand on the subject of expenses. He thus stated his position to a friend :

I have stated in the most distinct of unequivocal terms to any person with whom I have had communication that I was determined not to be at any expense whatever. I will accept the seat if tendered freely and gratuitously . . .

He added that John Gladstone estimated that at least £10,000 would be wanted and only expected £6,000 or £7,000 from Liverpool itself ; the rest must come from London, but £10,000 would be a trifle in a Liverpool contest a few years later, for in another famous election in 1830, Greville recorded that the two Parties had spent nearly £100,000 between them in unbridled corruption :

No concealment or even semblance of decency was observed ; the price of tallies and of votes rose, like stock, as the demand increased and single votes fetched £15 to £100 apiece. They voted by tally ; as each tally voted for one or the other candidate, they were furnished with a receipt for their votes with which they went to the committee, when through a hole in the wall a receipt was handed in and, through another, the stipulated sum handed out.

But, on the whole, it is true that the most famous elections of the past were fought in the great County constituency of Middlesex and in the City of Westminster. Of the many bitter Middlesex contests in which Burdett and others took part, the fiercest was that of 1768, when Wilkes stood against King and Government. One aspect of this fight was indicated by the declaration of local glaziers between Brentford and London that a single night of it was worth all our Indian victories put together in the window smashing wherever people failed to illuminate to the satisfaction of the mob. In 1768 Wilkes represented, as John Morley says, a "half-

unconscious protest on the part of the nation against the corruption and oppression of its oligarchical rulers and the misery and despair which their iniquitous laws entailed."

The chief crime of Wilkes, in the eyes of Government, was an article in No. 45 of a print called *The North Briton* against the prerogative of the Crown. It seems mild enough today, but the persecution to which it exposed Wilkes brought the country almost in sight of a revolution. On the morning of the Middlesex election, to quote Trevelyan's *Charles James Fox*, strategical points round Brentford, the polling place :

were occupied in force by the popular Party. Before daylight, 6,000 weavers from Spitalfields had taken possession of Piccadilly and the Oxford road, and allowed no man to travel into the country without a paper in his hat inscribed "No. 45. Wilkes and Liberty !" The coaches of Sir William Proctor and Mr. Cooke (the Government candidates) who ten days before had as fair a chance of being made Knights of the Shire by acclamation as any pair of candidates in the Kingdom, never got further West than Hyde Park Corner and did not return to town on their own wheels ; and it was with difficulty that the occupants of the ill-fated vehicles contrived to smuggle themselves into Brentford, only to find that Wilkes was polling five votes to every three of theirs.

Five and thirty years later when Burdett was at the centre of the election storms a contemporary writer declared :

It is impossible for any but those who have witnessed a Middlesex election to conceive the picture it exhibits ; it is one continual scene of riot, disorder and tumult.

Very similar was the comment of Henry Crabb Robinson on what he had seen of elections for the City of Westminster.

A scene only ridiculous and disgusting. The vulgar abuse of the candidates from the vilest rabble is not rendered endurable by either wit or good temper.

The ridiculous side is illustrated by Cyrus Redding, who was present when Sheridan and Paull were candidates :

A kind of stage was brought from Drury Lane Theatre supported on men's shoulders. On the stage were four tailors busily at work with a live goose and several huge cabbages. They came close up to the hustings before Paull, amidst roars of laughter.

The point, such as it was, being that Paull's father had been a tailor.

But of all Westminster elections the most famous was that of which Charles James Fox and the Duchess of Devonshire were hero and heroine in 1784. Of this struggle it was said that "All minor interests were swallowed up in a contest which held not only the capital, but also the nation, in suspense, while it rendered Covent Garden and its neighbourhood during three successive weeks a scene of outrage." Of the part played by the Duchess of Devonshire, some account may be found in Chapters V and XIII. At the moment, the tide which was flowing strongly through England was carrying young William Pitt to triumph, so that 160 supporters of the Fox-North coalition were thrown out of the House and mocked as "Fox's Martyrs." Only at Westminster did Fox himself stop the rot. He had formidable powers arrayed against him, with the King himself sending off despatches, now suggesting that bad votes should be put in to counterbalance those which he was sure were being used for Fox, now wondering whether the Quakers might not be mobilised against Fox. In opposition to the Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Salisbury headed a cohort of Tory ladies in support of Admiral Hood and Sir Cecil Wray.

The fight went on for forty days at full pressure; the Prince of Wales exerted all the influence he could and celebrated Fox's eventual triumph by a fête at Carlton House. Horace Walpole wrote :

Mr. Fox has all the popularity in Westminster; and indeed is so amiable and winning that, should he have stood in person all over England, I question if he would not have carried the Parliament. The

beldams hate him ; but most of the pretty women of England are indefatigable in making interest for him.

Meanwhile, Pitt was writing cheerfully to Wilberforce in Yorkshire ; "Westminster goes on well in spite of the Duchess of Devonshire and the other *women of the people*, but when the poll will close is uncertain." Actually, the poll was running in favour of Fox for the second seat ; on the twenty-third day of polling he passed Sir Cecil Wray and continued to gain until on the fortieth day when the law demanded the closure of the poll, the figures were : Hood, 6,694 ; Fox, 6,237 ; Wray, 5,998. Stanhope commented on these figures :

There was strong reason, however, to suspect many fraudulent practices on the previous days, since it seemed clear that the total number of votes recorded was considerably beyond the number of persons entitled to the franchise.

So Wray demanded a scrutiny, which led to much wrangling and a long delay before Fox, who had meanwhile been provided with a seat in the far North, could represent Westminster in Parliament.

Covent Garden and Westminster elections continued to provide Londoners with plenty of excitement. In 1819 Palmerston, not yet a Whig, sent a racy account to his brother of the Westminster election in which a protagonist was another future Prime Minister as Lord Melbourne :

There was not much row till the last day. They meant to chair Lamb and their infantry, consisting of some hundreds of bruisers and black-guards, were to have got possession of the ground and then about sixty Whig equestrians were to have come up and to have accompanied the procession . . . But Cribb, Gully and Baldwin declared that the chair was impossible, but they and Lamb should all be murdered if they attempted it. On this the committee gave way and went to stop the cavalry but the messenger missed them and at the appointed hour they arrived and found the avenues to Covent Garden blocked up by an immense crowd,



HOOD WRAY

By T. ROWLANDSON

THE WESTMINSTER WATCHMAN.

FOX

cut their way through, found the cavalry given up and cut their way back again. They were covered with blood and dirt and some received severe blows with stones. Lamb himself would certainly have been demolished but for an escort of Lifeguards.

In 1865 the hustings were fixed at Covent Garden for the last time and the mob were able for the last time to use unlimited supplies of rotten fruit, rotten potatoes and decayed cabbage stalks in welcoming the candidates. There were three candidates in what was then considered a Whig or Liberal stronghold and only one of the three could be considered orthodox. The other two were W. H. Smith, destined to lead the Tory Party in the Commons, and John Stuart Mill, the philosopher. Orthodox Tories looked with suspicion at Smith, who then called himself a Liberal-Conservative and was also a "tradesman," while Liberals hardly knew what to think of Mill, who had championed extreme Radicals like Bradlaugh. After a sharp contest, Whig orthodoxy was at the head of the poll with Mill as partner.

In 1868 came the last General Election before the introduction of the ballot put an end to the livelier side (or the more disreputable) of Westminster elections. The hustings were fixed at the base of the Nelson monument, and this time Mill was beaten and Smith obtained a seat. But a petition followed and things looked decidedly dark for Smith since, among other things, it came out that, while his opponents' expenses were less than £2,300, Smith's were just over £8,900, representing 22s. a vote against 3s. 6d. a vote on the other side.

Henry Hawkins was Counsel for Smith and there were some amusing passages. One witness, when asked, "What is a Conservative?" supplied a very uncomplimentary definition. Asked to define a Liberal, he said that "A Liberal, if he acts as a man and a gentleman, is a Liberal." But, it was put to him, "what if a Conservative acts as a man and a gentle-

man ?"—"Ah, Sir, but one rarely comes across such an one."

Baron Martin, the presiding Judge, summed up in a way which roused the liveliest apprehensions in the minds of Smith's supporters, though acquitting Smith himself of blame, but in the end, he gave his decision in favour of the elected candidate.

Perhaps among "famous elections" should be included some which we owe to our novelists for, in the 19th century, political novels had not yet been voted a bore and most of the well-known writers had political scenes. In addition to Eatanswill, Dickens gave us the election in *Our Mutual Friend*; Trollope in *Dr. Thorne* and other books; George Eliot, and Mrs. Humphry Ward, Mrs. Craigie, and so forth. Thackeray made great play in *The Newcomes* with his internecine battle in the Newcome family. But by far the most important of political novelists was Benjamin Disraeli, and the fourth chapter of Book V of *Coningsby* reads as freshly today as when it was published a century ago. Here is an extract :

'Tis polling day! The candidates are roused from their slumbers at an early hour by the music of their own band perambulating the town, and each playing the "Conquering Hero" to sustain the courage of their jaded employers by depriving them of that rest which can alone tranquillise the nervous system. There is something in that matin burst of music, followed by a shrill cheer from the boys of the Borough, the only inhabitants yet up, that is very depressing.

The committee rooms of each candidate are soon rife with black reports; each side has received fearful bulletins of the preceding night campaign; and its consequences as exemplified in the morning, unprecedented tergiversations, mysterious absences; men who breakfast with one side and vote with the other; men who won't come to breakfast; men who won't leave breakfast.

And there is a grim little scene between a candidate and his agent :

"You think it's all over ?"

"Why, I do not see how we can win. We have polled all our dead men and Millbank is seven ahead."

In *Sybil*, Egremont is describing his successful campaign :

"Oh, my mother did wonders ; we should have been beaten without her. Indeed, to tell the truth, I quite gave up the thing the moment they started their man. Before that we were on velvet ; but the instant he appeared everything was changed and I found some of my warmest supporters members of his Committee . . . Oh, a dreadful man ! A Scotchman, richer than Croesus, one McDrugg, fresh from Canton, with a million of opium in each pocket, denouncing corruption and bellowing Free Trade . . . It was a mistake and the cry was changed the moment my opponent was on the ground. Then all the town was placarded with 'Vote for McDrugg and our young Queen,' as if he had coalesced with Her Majesty . . . We issued our placard instantly of 'Vote for our young Queen and Egremont,' which was at least more modest and turned out more popular. My mother was in hourly communication with headquarters and Mr. Taper sent down the cry by express."

Even to this day we are blessed with our Tapers and our Tadpoles, those sapient "experts."

In *Endymion* we get another point of view :

Although *Endymion* had no rival, and apparently no prospect of a contest, his labours as a candidate were not slight. The constituency was numerous and every member of it expected to be called upon. To each Mr. Ferrars had to expound his political views and to receive from each a cordial assurance or a churlish criticism. All this he did and endured, accompanied by about fifty of the principal inhabitants, members of his Committee, who insisted on never leaving his side, and prompting him at every new door which he entered with contradictory reports of the political opinions of the indwellers, or confidential intimation how they were to be managed and addressed.

CHAPTER VIII

REFORM

MR. PITT made three attempts to induce the House of Commons to accept some measure of Reform. In May, 1782, he moved for a select Committee on Parliamentary Reform, in the course of which he dealt severely with corrupt influence :

An influence, Sir, which has been pointed at in every period as the fertile source of all our miseries—an influence which has been substituted in the room of wisdom, of activity, of exertion, and of success—an influence which has grown with our strength . . .

The motion was lost on a division, 141-161. Burke voted against it.

In 1783, Mr. Pitt offered three resolutions—for the prevention of bribery, for the disfranchisement of any Borough, the majority of whose voters were convicted of corruption, and for the giving of additional members to the counties and to London. This, too, was lost—149-293.

In 1785, being then Premier, he moved the purchase from 36 small Boroughs of their franchise in order to give members to populous places and counties. He proposed also a permanent scheme to transfer the franchise from decayed Boroughs as opportunity arose. This, his last attempt, was beaten 174-248. Unkind critics suggested that he viewed abuses with more tenderness when they were helpful to his administration.

With the details of the struggle at Westminster, which closed with the passing of what became the First Reform Act, we are not concerned here ; our business lies with the struggle as it concerned the electors or would-be electors outside. The rejoicings for the victory of Waterloo and the

end of the Napoleonic Wars were short-lived and by 1817 the condition of the country was already serious. The industrial North was convinced that there was no hope of any improvement from a Parliament so unrepresentative of great cities like Manchester and Leeds and Birmingham, which returned no members to it.

So, in 1819, Sir Francis Burdett revived the demand of Reform, basing it on the old maxim of the Common Law that "the people of England have a property in their own goods which are not to be taken from them without their own consent." In other words, no taxation without representation. He contented himself with a motion "that the House should take the subject of the representation into its consideration early in the next session," a motion which was rejected by a considerable majority.

Manchester still wore the livery of the Mosleys, as Cobden put it, and it was necessary for those interested in Reform to apply to the Boroughreeve and Constables to call a meeting nominally to petition Parliament to repeal the Corn Laws, but really to give an opportunity for an agitation for Reform. The application was refused, but it was resolved to hold it and Orator Hunt accepted an invitation to preside. A huge meeting was held which, on Hunt's suggestion, decided to ignore Parliament and to approach the Prince Regent direct. This meeting gave the cue to other towns and cities all over the country and, though very violent language was used, the meetings were generally entirely orderly in their behaviour, women as well as men taking part.

Blackburn had the distinction of establishing its own female Reform Society, which sent out circulars to the wives and daughters of workers inviting them to form sister societies to co-operate with the men.

The Government remained obdurate in the face of the clearest evidence that here was a perfectly genuine expression of popular feeling. Stories, however wild, of what went on

at the meetings were believed in Whitehall and repressive measures alone appealed to Ministers. On July 7th, 1819, the Home Office circularised the Lord Lieutenants of what were called "the disturbed Counties" instructing them to take strong measures "for the preservation of the public tranquillity" and to instruct the Yeomanry to hold themselves ready should their services be required. Only that curious ignorance of the character of the people which sometimes in our history has beset Whitehall, could have imagined that such measures could cow the spirit of the common people ; Birmingham reacted at once with a monster meeting which decided that, pending the acquisition of the Franchise, there should be an election there and then of "two legislative attorneys and representatives of Birmingham." This was done and the Government took further repressive measures. On August 16th there took place in Manchester the most famous of all these meetings, that which has come down to history as Peterloo. Enormous crowds gathered on Peter's Field ; many of those present carried banners with such devices as "Annual Parliaments," "Universal Suffrage," "Vote by Ballot." It was believed that 80,000 persons of both sexes were present, and the fact that so many women accompanied the men should have been proof sufficient that no disorder was intended. Nevertheless, Orator Hunt had not proceeded far with his opening speech when the Yeomanry appeared at a brisk trot, much to the alarm of the part of the crowd nearest to them. They stopped to dress their ranks and then drew their swords, "which they flourished in a threatening manner." The crowd cheered. It seems very unlikely that the reading of the Riot Act can have been heard in any part of the crowd, nor was it called upon to disperse. Hunt went on with his speech, but presently the Yeomanry forced a way to the wagon from which Hunt was speaking and the commander called on Hunt to surrender. He replied that he would do so to any civil officer armed with



THE LAW'S DELAY.

READING THE RIOT ACT, 1820.

By G. CRUIKSHANK

a warrant ; meanwhile he called upon the people to behave quietly.

Hunt then gave himself up to Constable Nadin, but the Yeomanry raised a cry of "Have at the flags," and drove into the crowd, cutting at them with their swords ; a dreadful scene followed. Terrified people tried to scatter, but it was impossible to escape, so closely were they packed and the Yeomanry charged triumphantly through the crowd, breaking it up into groups, pursued by the troopers. Between 300 and 400 people were cut or otherwise injured and the blame must lie between the magistrate and the Yeomanry officers. Sir William Molesworth (*History of the Reform Bill of 1832*) commented :

It was an act of reckless inhumanity to choose such a moment for the arrest of Hunt and his associates. It was still more improper to employ in such a service a body of ill-disciplined Yeomanry, when regular troops were at hand who would have effected the arrest without the provoking bravado and ill-temper which the Yeomanry displayed. Indeed, nothing could be more striking than the contrast presented on this occasion between the volunteer force and the troops of the line. The latter acted with mingled coolness and firmness and inflicted no injury whatever on the crowd. Had they been employed to make the arrest, the meeting might have been dispersed, not, perhaps, without complaint, but without bloodshed and without engendering that feeling of burning indignation which the conduct of the Yeomanry excited.

I have dealt at some length with the Peterloo massacre because all the circumstances attending it demonstrate so clearly the contrast between the temper of the people at that time and the craven fears of the Government which, as is generally the case, induced ill-considered severity and exasperated public opinion.

Yet, in the years immediately following, the cry for Reform seemed to lose some of its urgency, chiefly because the prosperity of the country through the industrial revolution was increasing. This was short-lived and by the end of

the eighteen-twenties distress was widespread once more, not only in the industrial, but also in agricultural districts. Wages in both industry and agriculture were miserably low; a twelve-hour day in the factories of Lancashire and Yorkshire produced, in many cases, as little as tenpence; agricultural labourers had to depend on public assistance:

Many parishes were reduced to such a state of pauperism that the whole of the property within their limits was insufficient for the maintenance of their poor; and assistance had to be sought from neighbouring parishes already overburdened with the expense of supporting their own paupers.

When Parliament met in 1830 the country was as near to revolution as at any time since the 17th century. Lord Blandford led a new Reform crusade and introduced a Bill "to regulate abuses in the elections of members of Parliament," in which it was proposed that a Committee should be chosen by ballot to review all the Boroughs and cities in the Kingdom with a view to restoring something like the system of Edward I's Model Parliament. The Bill was coldly received on both sides of the House.

Next there was a nibble at Reform by a motion for leave to bring in a Bill to enlarge the constituency of East Retford by giving the franchise to the freeholders of the adjoining Hundred of Bassetlaw. A counter motion proposed to deprive the Borough of East Retford of the right of electing members and to give two members to Birmingham instead. There had been a previous suggestion for the transfer of the right of election from Penryn, in Cornwall, to Manchester, but although Peel himself had voted in favour of that abortive measure, he opposed the Birmingham suggestion, and the original plan was carried by 27 votes. At the same time there came from Newark a petition asserting that the Duke of Newcastle had evicted not only tenants of his own but sub-tenants of properties which he leased from the Crown, for voting against his wishes in an election. Lord John

Russell continued his efforts for Reform, but little real progress was made until the death of George IV necessitated a general election under the old rule governing action on the demise of the Crown.

Just as the election was to begin there took place in France the July Revolution, which caused an immense sensation throughout the Continent, with the result that in this country the Government lost heavily in the election. Wellington came out at once with a declaration against Reform and this was followed by the foolish action of the Lord Mayor in warning the Home Office that it might be ill-advised to let Ministers attend the usual Guildhall banquet with the result that the King was advised to postpone his visit. The feeling against the Government rose to fever heat all over the country, and on November 14th, 1830, a motion on the Civil List was carried against the Government by a majority of 29. It had been announced during Brougham's triumphant election fight in Yorkshire that he intended to bring in a Bill for electoral Reform at the earliest possible moment. Accordingly, after consideration by a Committee of the Cabinet, Lord John Russell introduced his Reform Bill on March 1st, 1831, with this preface :

The object of Ministers has been to produce a measure with which every reasonable man in the country will be satisfied—we wish to take our stand between the two hostile parties, neither agreeing with the bigotry of those who would reject all Reform, nor with the fanaticism of those who contend that only one plan of reform would be wholesome or satisfactory, but placing ourselves between both, and between the abuses we intend to amend and the convulsion we hope to avert . . . The chief grievances of which the people complain are these. First, the nomination of members by individuals ; second, the election by close Corporations ; third, the expense of elections.

He went on to explain that there were a number of Boroughs with less than 2,000 inhabitants returning two members and others containing less than 4,000 inhabitants also returning

two members. For the first class, the famous schedule A, he proposed complete disfranchisement ; for the second class, schedule B, he proposed to halve the representation. He then proceeded to read "amid much laughter" lists of the Boroughs coming into the two schedules. To these lists, Sir William Molesworth, in his *History* of the Bill, added the prevailing influence in each Borough and the number of electors. These lists I have analysed and results may be of interest. Of the 103 Boroughs in the two schedules, 67 had Peers of the Realm as the prevailing influence. Seven Dukes, seven Marquesses, 18 Earls, and 19 other Peers had the prevailing influence in one or more of the Boroughs. With regard to the number of electors in those with less than 2,000 inhabitants, there were eleven with not more than 25 electors, there were twelve whose electors ranged between 26 and 50, and nineteen between 51 and 100. In those which were to lose one of their members there were seven which had not more than 25 electors, six from 26 to 50 and seven from 51 to 100. In spite of the storm raised by these proposals which were slightly modified before the last of the three Bills passed the Lords, the figures quoted seem ample warrant for the Government's suggestions. Lord John proposed to feed the counties with members taken from the rotten and nomination Boroughs ; the three Ridings of Yorkshire were to receive two members each, and 26 counties with more than 156,000 population were each to receive two additional members.

A number of towns, with Manchester, Birmingham and Leeds at their head, were to receive two members and a number of others one member each.

It may be more convenient to summarise the other proposals when we come to the passing of the third Bill. What happened to the First Bill was that, after long debate, leave was given to bring in the Bill and also Bills for Scotland and Ireland. The effect on the country was described as producing

delight among the Whigs and terror among the Tories, for although it fell a good deal short of Radical demands which included the ballot and more frequent elections and universal suffrage, moderate progressive people welcomed it with enthusiasm and "the Bill, the whole Bill and nothing but the Bill" became the slogan of the Whigs.

Among the Tories and the landed families there was genuine alarm ; they wondered how long it would be before they were stripped of all their property and perhaps driven into exile as had happened in the French Revolution. The clergy were loud in denunciation, they, too, remembered what had happened to the Church and its priests in France, but their attitude only increased their unpopularity and it has been said that a Bill for the disestablishment and disendowment of the Church could have been passed at that time without difficulty. Naturally, all those who controlled Borough elections, some of whom had spent quite recently considerable sums in acquiring that form of property, were bitterly hostile.

On the other side was the new class created by the industrial revolution in Lancashire and Yorkshire, the mill owners and those associated with them, and this class was backed by the mass of the common people who had no actual interest in the Bill and actually, in a few cases, lost franchise rights by it. Shopkeepers supported the Bill also. There was, in fact, a fairly clear division between the privileged classes and the rest, and it was noted that even children were taking sides and "often outdid their parents in enthusiasm for or against 'the Bill'." For the rest, it was being said that the quarters from which "the most formidable and pertinacious resistance to the Bill proceeded were the Court, the two Universities, the Inns of Court and the other seats of learning."

As the time went on, excitement in the country grew to fever pitch. The Bill banished all other topics of interest on

market days and in the streets of the industrial North. The great event was the arrival in each town of the London coaches bringing the latest news and sometimes the wildest rumours. The press fanned the flame. A Tory member brought to the notice of the Commons a paragraph which appeared in *The Times* :

When, night after night, Borough nominees rise to infest the proceedings of the House of Commons with arguments to justify their own intrusion into it and their continuance there, thus maintaining what lawyers call an adverse possession, in spite of judgment against them, we really feel inclined to ask why the rightful owners of the House should be longer insulted by the presence of such unwelcome inmates. It is beyond question a piece of the broadest and coolest effrontery in the world, for these hired lackeys of public delinquents to stand up as advocates of the disgraceful service they have embarked in.

On March 23rd, 1831, the House divided on second reading. Greville wrote :

The fullest House that ever was known—303 to 302—both Parties confident up to the moment of division . . . The agitation on the division was prodigious. There was betting going on all night long and large sums were won and lost.

Macaulay described how when it was known that there was a majority of one for the Bill :

We set up a shout that you could have heard to Charing Cross, waving our hats, stamping against the floor and clapping our hands . . . But you might have heard a pin drop as Duncannon read the numbers. Then again the shouts broke out, and many of us shed tears. I could scarcely refrain . . . All the passages and stairs into the waiting rooms were crowded by people who had waited till four in the morning to know the issue. We passed through a narrow lane between two thick masses of them ; and all the way down they were shouting and waving their hats till we got into the open air. I called a cabriolet and the first thing the driver asked was, "Is the Bill carried?" "Yes, by one." "Thank God for it, sir."

No one realised at that moment what vicissitudes were still in store for the Bill. On April 12th, Lord John Russell announced some modifications which might be made owing to the fact that the population figures had been calculated on the census of 1821, whereas another census result was becoming available and advantage would be taken of this fact. Meanwhile, Ministers had been studying the Bill once more during the Easter recess and some changes would be made in schedules A and B so that some more counties and boroughs would have extra members allotted to them. On certain terms, the right of persons who already enjoyed the franchise would be extended to their sons on coming of age if born before the introduction of the Bill. The rights of apprentices were further safeguarded also. On April 18th, when the House went into committee on the Bill and these changes were proposed in detail, General Gascoyne moved the following instruction :

That it is the opinion of this House that the total number of Knights, Citizens and Burgesses returned to Parliament for that part of the United Kingdom called England and Wales ought not to be diminished.

At past four o'clock on the morning of the 20th, the House divided : For the motion, 299 ; against, 291. Government therefore was defeated by eight votes. The King was adverse to a dissolution and had told Ministers that he would not dissolve in order to enable them to carry their Bill ; also supplies for this year had not yet been voted. However, on April 22nd, the adjournment of the House was moved as a step in forcing a dissolution. This was pressed to a division and carried by 22 votes. The Cabinet met on this, and decided that Parliament must be prorogued at once with a view to dissolution and deputed Lords Grey and Brougham to obtain the King's consent. After a stormy interview the King agreed and went down to the House where a scene of the utmost violence was proceeding. Lord Mansfield was actually addressing the House when the King was announced,

The election of April, 1831, was a triumph for the Reformers. The houses of the Anti-Reform Party, which alone were not illuminated at the dissolution, had their windows broken, notably those of the Duke of Wellington suffered, and Molesworth wrote :

And now the election struggle commenced ; the last that took place under the old system which allowed the poll to be kept open for many days, during the whole or a part of which drunkenness, rioting, bribery, and every kind of excess prevailed. On this occasion, the cry of "The Bill, the Whole Bill, and Nothing but the Bill," rang from one extremity of the country to the other. The one question put to all candidates was, "Will you support or oppose this Bill ?" . . . By each Party large sums were subscribed to defray the enormous expense of the contest. Bribery and improper influence were resorted to on both sides . . .

Of the 82 county members for England, all, with the exception of about half a dozen representatives of some of the smallest, were pledged to the Bill. In Ireland and Scotland the counties and open Boroughs were equally favourable to the Bill, though in Scotland there were terrible scenes of disorder and bitterness, and in more than one case only the timely arrival of the military prevented bloodshed.

The King read his speech on June 21st, and on the 24th Lord John produced his Reform Bill again. In the peroration of his speech he declared :

Love to one's country is a passion and by that love the electors have indisputably been moved. This love, this passion, has kindled in them that noble degree of enthusiasm which makes men forget their own petty interests, and nothing but such a passion would induce men who could earn by their industry but a few shillings a week to refuse the bribes that were within their reach, to withstand the temptations that were thrown in their way and to give up the prospect for themselves and their children of continuing to enjoy the valuable privilege . . .

After a debate in which the old arguments were repeated, the House gave it a second reading and it passed the Com-

mons by a majority of 106 on September 19th, only to be thrown out by the Lords on October 8th, the voting being—against the Government, 199 ; for the Government, 158.

This was really the culmination of the struggle of the landed interest which, besides owning or nominating for a majority of seats for the Commons in normal times, had obtained in 1710 an Act which demanded that every member of the House of Commons should be able to produce proof of an income derived from land. This would have excluded some of its greatest members and it had become a regular business to supply new members with the proof required until, in 1858, property qualification was abolished.

But the defeat of the Bill roused a formidable storm throughout the country. On October 12th, 60,000 persons walked in procession to St. James's Palace to present addresses to the King. A deputation was received graciously and Hume asked the procession to disperse quietly after announcing that he had the King's assurance that every effort should be exerted to ensure the passage of the Bill. But this was too much to expect. Apsley House and Lord Bristol's house were attacked. The Duke of Cumberland, the King's Tory brother, was dragged from his horse and rescued with difficulty, Lord Londonderry was another victim.

At Derby there was a dangerous riot ; at Nottingham, the Castle, belonging to the Duke of Newcastle, was burnt out ; at Birmingham a meeting of 150,000 persons received with enthusiasm a speech which declared that :

If all constitutional modes of obtaining the success of the Reform measure fail, I will be the first man to refuse the payment of taxes except by a levy on my goods. I now call upon all who hear me and are prepared to join me in this step to hold up their hands.

The Political Unions already established in Manchester, Liverpool, and Birmingham were by this time alarming Ministers by their language and proceedings and it was decided to proclaim them as unconstitutional and illegal, but

before the proclamation had been issued there occurred the terrible Bristol Riots at the end of October. The Recorder was Sir Charles Wetherell, who exercised within the County of Bristol (for Bristol was then a county as well as a city), the functions of one of H.M. Judges, and it was customary to receive him with due ceremony when he went down to open the Assizes. Sir Charles was one of the fiercest and most pertinacious of the enemies of Reform and of the Bill enthusiastically supported by the Bristol mob, the most savage in the kingdom. Not unnaturally, therefore, his arrival at the end of October provoked a riot. Unfortunately, quite inadequate measures had been taken for dealing with such a situation ; nor was there a proper confidence between the few troops, immediately available, and the magistrates.

In the course of the riot which followed Sir Charles' arrival, the mob fired the Mansion House, the Bishop's Palace, the Excise Office, the Customs House, three prisons, four toll houses and 42 private dwellings and warehouses. Many people lost their lives before order was restored. Moreover, though Bristol was the worst case, there were riots and disturbances in many other parts of the kingdom.

On December 12th a Bill was introduced with some further modifications. Before the end of March it had passed the Commons. On April 13th the second reading was carried in the Lords by a majority of nine, but in committee a motion unfavourable to the Bill was carried on May 7th by a majority of 35. The King considered the matter at issue merely one of detail insufficient to warrant him in creating Peers, as he had undertaken to do, though reluctantly, in order to carry the Bill. On May 9th, therefore, Earl Grey announced the resignation of the Ministers and feeling in the country rose to fever heat. The King was insulted both in the Press and in the streets, and it was evident that Ministers must be recalled. On the evening of May 17th, therefore, the King handed to Brougham this note :*

*Some doubt has been thrown on the accuracy of Brougham's statement.



SINDBAD THE SAILOR AND THE OLD MAN
OF THE SEA, JUNE 8, 1833.

By J. DOYLE

The King grants permission to Earl Grey and to his Chancellor, Lord Brougham, to create such a number of Peers as will be sufficient to ensure the passing of the Reform Bill—first calling up Peers' eldest sons.

On the following day Lord Grey announced the return of Ministers; without making Peers, the Bill then went through Committee in six days, and on June 5th some small amendments from the Lords were accepted by the Commons and the Royal assent followed.

Summarised, it swept away boroughs, returning 112 members, and 30 more lost one member; it gave the counties 65 more members and 42 cities and towns were enfranchised. The county franchise was retained by the old forty-shilling freeholders but with the addition of copyholders, leaseholders and tenants-at-will of £50 a year. For the boroughs, in Lord John's words, the franchise went to "all persons of full age and not legally disqualified, occupying a house, warehouse, or shop, separately or jointly, with land of the yearly value of £10. The Bill will continue the franchise to all freemen possessing it by birth or servitude, for ever, provided they reside within the city or borough or within seven miles of the place of voting." The Bill also made provision for the registration of all electors, with a further provision that the poll should be kept open for two days as against the protracted periods of which we have heard something in previous chapters. Polling booths in each county must not exceed 15 in number, and no elector would have to travel more than 15 miles to vote; the poll to be closed on the third day and, "an account of the number of votes" to be published on the sixth day.

As for the results of the Act, Sir William Molesworth in his excellent *History of the Reform Bill of 1832*, has this, after detailing the chief features of the Act:

On the other hand, it greatly impaired the direct influence of the working classes in the elections by diminishing the number of franchises in Preston and other towns, where before the Reform Bill was carried,

the suffrage was nearly universal. It must also be confessed that the mechanism of the measure was in many respects faulty . . . But the defects, though much to be regretted, are as dust in the balance when weighed against the solid gain which was obtained by the abolition of the crying abuses and mischievous working of the system the Bill swept away . . . The vast expansion of our trade, commerce and manufactures, which has since taken place, could not have been effected if the landed interest had continued to possess that virtual monopoly of legislation which was taken from them.

This may be a convenient point at which to touch on some characteristics of Irish and Scottish electors. It has been said of the Irish generally that, while in the social and some of the moral virtues, they may be compared favourably with English and Scots, in the political virtues upon which civil institutions must rest, they are several generations behind their fellow-subjects of Great Britain. On the other hand, the treatment they had received was hardly likely to inculcate political virtue. It is no business of mine to trace the sad history of Southern Ireland over a period of a century and a half, but there are some things which should be remembered. In the first place, Catholic Emancipation was part of a bargain, thus stigmatised by Brodrick and Fotheringham in their *Political History of England, 1801 to 1837* :

The disfranchisement of the 40s. freeholder and the substitution of a £10 suffrage was the price to be paid and no time was lost in completing the bargain. In days when it is assumed that every change in the electoral franchise must needs be in a downward direction, it may well appear amazing that so wholesale a destruction of privileges enjoyed for thirty-six years should have provoked so feeble an opposition. It is still more amazing that it should have passed without a protest from O'Connell himself who had solemnly vowed to perish on the field or on the scaffold rather than submit to it. Yet so it was. These ignorant voters, it is true, had never ventured to call their souls their own and only ceased to be the servile creatures of the landowners in order to become the servile creatures of the priests.

Its purpose was to curb Catholic "disloyalty" and for some time it succeeded, but "it naturally produced a contrary effect in Ireland itself and was destined to be swept away before the fresh wave of agitation." Actually, the £10 Borough Franchise amply balanced the loss of democratic influence in the counties, but it changed the influence of Protestants to Catholics and the rule of the priests became absolute till checked by a democratic movement. And the Irish vote in the House of Commons was generally Radical. When it came to the First Reform Act the disfranchisement of the 40s. freeholder was maintained, though now O'Connell and Sheil fought strongly against it.

But the land question continued to dominate others in Southern Ireland. The son of an Irish landlord went with his father to inspect a small farm where a tenant had died leaving no direct descendants. The landlord was surrounded by neighbouring tenants bidding ludicrous prices against each other. At last, the few fields were divided among them at about half the rent which they had been offering. Of course, only a minority of Irish landlords were wise enough to refuse to accept impossible rents suggested by land hunger and, in some cases, as on the notorious Clanricarde estate, tenants' improvements were made a pretext for rent increases. Then came famine and utter disaster and so for two generations under successive leaders, O'Connell to Parnell and beyond, Land Acts and Coercion Acts, anger and misery broke the hearts of statesmen and embittered the people.

Disraeli and Gladstone tried in turn to introduce some uniformity as between the franchise for England and that for Ireland, but the Irish Unionists objected strongly to the extension of the franchise by Gladstone to all householders in Ireland. It was argued that between twenty-five per cent. and thirty per cent. of the small farmers and working classes in Ireland could neither read nor write, so that the Ballot Act had no real meaning there since their votes had to be

taken viva voce at the polling booths, and were thus generally known and could only with safety be cast on the popular side ; in England and Scotland, meanwhile, illiteracy was decreasing.

Things were very different in Northern Ireland where the Protestants were in the ascendant and Belfast had become an important industrial city. The religious feud between North and South was illustrated perhaps by a story Lord Frederick Hamilton used to tell forty years ago of an Ulsterman who was described to him as a decent religious-minded man. Hamilton asked what this meant. "Who! he just walks up and down in front of the Roman Catholic Chapel while the Mass is going on, foiring off his gun, and shouting, 'Bloody end to the Pope' !" O'Connell may have had some dream of uniting North and South, but the thing was beyond human power.

In Scotland the Union had been as unpopular as ever in Ireland and the unpopularity seems to have been evenly shared on either side of the Border. In the seventeen sixties, David Hume was still unreconciled. "From what human consideration," he asked Sir Gilbert Elliot, "can I prefer living in England than in foreign countries ? Can you seriously talk of my continuing an Englishman ? Am I, or are you, an Englishman ? Do they not treat with derision our pretension to that name, and with hatred our just pretension to surpass any Government ?" As for the franchise at the time of the first Reform Act, Judge Advocate Jeffrey said that the process was comparatively simple since the whole previous system must be swept away. Scotland was given eight new members, bringing the total to 53, 30 in the counties, 23 in the cities and burghs. The old freeholders, many of whom owned no land at all, were superseded by a body of mixed free and leaseholders and the monopoly of town councils gave way to a £10 franchise for householders. During the 18th century the county franchise

had actually got into the hands of a few big landowners holding land directly from the Crown, who transferred their powers at election time to other persons and reclaimed them afterwards. Henry Dundas, Lord Melville, used to say that he hoped to see the day when "a nobleman of £10,000 a year would not disdain to take off his hat to a gentleman of £500 and would seek to gain influence, not by a weight of votes, but by the way in which he did his duty to his neighbours, and so deserve popularity." But it was noted that Dundas never did anything to promote that end during the years when, with Indian patronage at his disposal, he wielded enormous power in Scotland, so much so that in 1797 he secured the return of 36 of the 45 members elected. The tendency had been that the great landowners were Whiggish and the lairds inclined to Toryism. Gladstone's comment many years after 1832 and at the end of his own career was that "the great Reform Act was for England improvement and extension, for Scotland it was political birth." Certainly the Scottish elector became a very important factor in politics. Gladstone himself, Asquith, Birrell and John Morley were among the leading members of the Liberal Party who found seats there in the 19th century; Macaulay represented Edinburgh, and Scotsmen in high office included two very different Prime Ministers, Campbell Bannerman and MacDonald, and Haldane. If the Scottish elector could be differentiated from electors across the Border, it might be said of him that religious questions were frequently of more importance than in England and that the Scottish elector judged candidates by a different standard. The Scottish heckler was a very different person from the mere brawler at an English political meeting. When Asquith first stood for East Fife, someone at a meeting dismissed him as a "clever lawyer," but an old heckler who had tried the candidate's power, shook his head, "Nae, he's a clever lawyer but he's mair." And mair Asquith certainly

was. Of the penetrating character of Scottish heckling there is no better example perhaps than that of Henry George explaining his Land Taxation idea to a meeting at Forfar. When he had finished, he invited questions and an old farmer rose, "Ye'll have land o' yer ain?" This was denied. "Ye'll be a tenant o' land?" "I am no man's tenant." "Ye'll be an agent for land, manage it for someone else?" "Not at all. I have nothing to do with land." "I thocht so." And the old farmer sat down triumphantly.

Necessarily an Irish meeting would be a much more emotional affair in which the personality of the speakers would count for more. Causes have been more important than persons in Scottish politics, but in Southern Ireland names have always counted—loyalty to O'Connell, Sheil and, as the power of the priests waned, to Parnell and those who came after. On the other side, names again had been important—Drummond, Forster, Spencer, Bloody Balfour, Boycott, Clanricarde and so on in sad succession. We can see the difference also in the fact that in Scotland a "Nationalist" Party has been little in evidence until quite recently and has yet to make much impression on the electors, whereas in Ireland, Nationalism took over from the Repealers and gave us at last the Eire of today.

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CHAPTER IX

FIFTY YEARS OF PROGRESS

AND so the Grey Government had achieved Reform and had succeeded where Cromwell, Chatham, William Pitt and many another had striven without success. Gladstone used to talk of the Act of 1832 as the "Magna Charta of British liberties" and, in a fine passage in a letter at the very end of his political career he spoke of his period as beginning with the Act of 1832 :

That great Act was for England improvement and extension, for Scotland it was political birth, the beginning of a duty and a power neither of which had attached to the Scottish nation in the preceding period. I rejoice to think how the solemnity of that duty has been recognised, and how that power has been used. The three score years are for us the picture of what the historian will recognise as a great legislative and administrative period—perhaps, on the whole, the greatest in our annals. It has been predominantly a history of emancipation—that is of enabling man to do his work of emancipation, political, economical, social, moral, intellectual.

But in the moment of victory, few indeed thought of the task as having attained no more than a preliminary stage. Even Lord John Russell mentioned finality and so acquired a nickname. The Whigs generally were satisfied with their work ; the Tories sullenly expected disaster ; only a small band of Radicals looked forward confidently to new advances, especially to the introduction of the ballot and to universal suffrage. Orator Hunt declaimed against any idea that the people had received their just due in the Act :

The Suffrage is not widely enough extended if the rabble, as they are called, are not to have votes. Am I to be told that the people who have fought the battle of their country, the lower orders whom I call the

useful class of society, are to be called upon to pay taxes on every article of human subsistence and afterwards denied the choosing of representatives :

Set against this the dictum of Braxfield in addressing the jury at the end of a sedition trial in Edinburgh forty years earlier :

A Government in every country should be just like a Corporation ; and in this country it is made up of the landed interest, which alone has a right to be represented. As for the rabble, who have nothing but personal property, what hold has the nation upon them ? What security for the payment of their taxes ? They may pack up all their property on their backs and leave the country in the twinkling of an eye.

In any case, the passing of the Act did not bring prosperity and though further steps were taken in the Municipal Corporation Act to reduce corruption and by an Act of 1858 to sweep away the landed property qualification, discontent had reached the dangerous pitch again by 1838. Educated Radicals, like Grote, Roebuck and Leader continued to work in the House of Commons and outside and produced every year a Ballot Bill.

But in 1838 the "rabble" was on the move again and an exasperated people began to give eager adherence to what was called the People's Charter, a programme of six points—Universal Suffrage, Vote by Ballot, Annual Parliaments, and Payment of Members. Fifthly, the Repeal of the Property Qualification, lastly Equal Electoral Districts. It will be noticed that each of the other five points, regarded as so dangerous that when a great national petition supporting them was brought into Parliament, it was rejected at once, are now a commonplace of our political system. Local leaders were found all over the country, notably a Nonconformist minister named Stephens and Feargus O'Connor. A meeting of 200,000 persons on Kersal Moor, near Manchester, cheered when Stephens declared :

The meaning of Universal Suffrage is that every working man in the land has a right to a good coat, a good hat, a good roof, a good dinner ; no more work than will keep him in health and as much wages as will keep him in plenty.

There were riots all over the country, notably at Birmingham and at Newport, which discredited the Charter in the minds of private citizens, that middle class which the Act of 1832 had enfranchised.

There was trouble, too, in Ireland, owing to the failure of attempts to introduce a system of registration similar to that laid down by the Act of 1832 for England. At the same time various other questions were being agitated ; the desire for a better factory system, for some real system of national education, and for the repeal of the Corn Laws. The Anti-Corn Law League was regarded with dislike by the Chartists as mainly a middle-class movement which drew away the attention of the country and the Government from the sufferings and aspirations of the common people.

The Whig Government, at the head of which Melbourne had succeeded Grey in 1834, fell in 1841, and Peel's administration had other preoccupations, notably the fight for Free Trade and the terrible potato famine in Ireland which contributed much to the success of the Free Traders. Lord John Russell came in again in 1846 and the Reform movement received a new impetus. The year 1848 was that of revolution in Europe and brought the Chartist agitation to a head once more. There had been in the preceding years some division of opinion within the movement caused largely by the violent character of the agitation by extremists in 1842 who had proclaimed a general strike to secure the passing of the Charter. Lancashire and Staffordshire especially were in a turbulent condition and Feargus O'Connor headed the wild section while the more constitutional section called itself the Complete Suffrage Party. Strong action had been taken by Peel and order restored for a time.

But in 1848 the more violent section of the Chartists began to stir again. In the election of 1847 several friends of the movement had been returned to Parliament and O'Connor himself had defeated at Nottingham, John Cam Hobhouse, a member of the Government and one of the champions of the original Reform Act.

In April, 1848, the country was genuinely alarmed. Great numbers of special constables were sworn in, the Duke of Wellington was instructed to take measures for the security of the Capital, for it was believed that, excited by events in France, the Chartists intended to overthrow the Monarchy and to establish a Republic. Half a million people, it was said, would meet on Kennington Common on April 10th and would proceed thence to carry to Westminster the Chartist Petition signed by 5,000,000 men. The danger was averted by the Commissioner of Police who took O'Connor aside and told him that he might hold his meeting, but that he would be held personally responsible for anything that followed. O'Connor's resolution failed him. The situation was saved. Moreover, when the petition was examined it was found that it contained not 5,000,000 but 2,000,000 signatures and that many of these were false. That, in effect, was the end of Chartism.

It was not the end of Reform movements, but as these involved struggles within the House rather than outside they may be noticed more briefly.

Thus, in June, 1848, Joseph Hume, one of the stalwarts of the Radical group, made a motion on Parliamentary Reform interesting for Disraeli's first considered utterances on the subject into which he was to enter largely before long. It was then that he threw scorn on the claim of "a right to vote." He illustrated this by the fact that the country was governed by a woman, that women were allowed to hold land, to be ladies of the Manor and hold legal courts, to be churchwardens—"I do not see, when she has so much to do

with State and Church on what reasons, if you come to right, she has not a right to vote." All of which satisfied him that there was no right to vote ; it was a privilege. Queen Victoria, who was a strong, almost a violent opponent of female suffrage, must have thought this queer doctrine.

Hume's motion for the ballot, household suffrage, triennial Parliaments and more equal electoral districts was rejected, though Disraeli, at least, was careful to assert that he was no friend to finality.

Meanwhile, Lord John Russell was in the field again, but nothing came of his attempts in 1852 and 1854. The earlier Bill was not of a very sweeping nature though it proposed to lower the County Franchise from £50 to £20 and the Borough Franchise from £10 to £5. Faced with the Crimean War the country was little minded to proceed with Parliamentary Reform. In February, 1859, Disraeli himself produced his first scheme, though his plan cost the Cabinet two of its members. The Borough Franchise was to remain at £10, but the County Franchise was to be reduced from £50 to £10 and the votes of urban freeholders were to be transferred from the counties to the boroughs. "Fancy Franchises" were introduced based on personal property, public service and educational qualifications. A vote was to be given to the possession of £10 a year from the funds, of £60 in the savings bank, or of a Government pension of £20 ; to dwellers in part of a £20 house, that is to say, to lodgers, to University graduates, to ministers of religion, lawyers, doctors, and certificated schoolmasters. One member was taken from 15 boroughs with a population of less than 6,000 but returning two members and these were divided between the West Riding, South Lancashire, Middlesex and a few towns hitherto unrepresented. All this was claimed by Disraeli as bringing the Act of 1832 up-to-date. Frankly, the Bill was designed to secure the long-hoped-for Conservative majority, but after a second reading

debate which covered nearly two weeks, it was thrown out by 39 in a division, 291-330.

And here must be noted a state of things which must seem curious to all who have followed the tremendous agitation which had attended the question of Reform in the past. Bulwer Lytton, in the course of a remarkable speech, put his finger on the truth. "Doubtless nine out of ten said loudly, 'We must have a Reform Bill,' but eight out of every nine whispered to each other, 'Does anybody want one?'" In fact, since the decline of Chartism, the old popular cry for Reform had lost its urgency. Bright had toured the country in the previous autumn without succeeding in raising anew the standard of Popular Reform. According to Greville, Government speakers had the better of the oratory, but in the country outside the defeat of the Bill made little noise. Horizons had widened for town dwellers, the growth of Trade Unions had diverted some at least of their interest from Reform, and it is possible that with greater knowledge a certain cynicism about the blessings of Reform and the practical value of the vote was to be found in the cities.

Certainly Lord John Russell's Bill in 1860 made no stir anywhere. Its principal features were the introduction of an occupation franchise of £10 for the counties and of a borough franchise lowered to £6. He proposed also to take away one vote from 25 boroughs, dividing the spoil between county divisions and the large boroughs. But the Bill was still-born. None the less, Lord John was still obsessed by the idea of Reform, regarding himself as under a solemn pledge, and in 1866 when Russell had gone to the Lords and was Premier, it appeared again in a speech from the Throne and this was followed by another Bill in defence of which Gladstone explained that the great Reform Bill of 1832 had, in his opinion, been largely sacrificed in order to get it passed. He was ready to concentrate now on the lowering and re-arrangement of the franchise—the county franchise to be

£14, which it was thought would bring in 171,000 new voters. There was to be a vote for a person with £50 deposited in the savings bank untouched for two years estimated as adding 15,000 new voters. The borough franchise was to be lowered from £10 to £7 and compound householders (tenants whose rates were paid by the landlord) occupiers of parts of houses and lodgers were to be admitted if the value of their holding was a clear £7, estimated on the rental. All these were to bring in a grand total of 400,000 new voters.

Once more the public was apathetic and the House generally hostile. Gladstone fought the battle tenaciously in the Commons, but the Bill foundered in Committee; Government resigned.

But now that the Russell-Gladstone Bill had been thrown out, public opinion was roused once more and there was a renewal of disturbance in the country. Radicals and working-class leaders began to agitate, feeling not unnaturally, that the defeat of the Liberal Government might mean the postponement of any genuine measure of Reform. Accordingly, leagues and associations were formed all over the country, notably one under the title of the Reform League. The League determined to hold a big demonstration in Hyde Park; the Home Secretary of the Conservative Government which had displaced that of Lord Russell, determined to stop it; the Park gates were closed; a strong force of police was mobilised. None the less, several processions with bands marched on Marble Arch; the leaders demanded admittance, which was refused.

Nearly twenty years earlier the tact of the Commissioner of Police had saved a dangerous situation and there was some reason to hope that trouble would be avoided when the leaders moved off to Trafalgar Square and held an orderly meeting. But by this time a great crowd had gathered round the east end of the Park and its sympathies were entirely

with the Leaguers, who had behaved hitherto in a perfectly orderly way. Once the leaders had left the scene, the mob got out of hand, pulled down the railings of the Park and crowded in. Troops were ordered out, but fortunately it was not necessary for them to take any action.

But this affair, though it caused most alarm, was by no means the only demonstration and these processions of protest went on in various parts of the country, though, in actual fact the new Government was busy with plans for a Reform Bill, aimed at satisfying the just requirements of urban dwellers. We are not concerned here with the struggle of the Cabinet on the floor of the House and in the Tea room nor with certain "fancy" franchises which early disappeared. The Bill, introduced on March 18th, 1867, and passed on August 15th, was largely reshaped during its passage and, as it was passed into law, it had these effects. In boroughs all male householders rated to the Poor Rate, all lodgers resident for one year and paying £10 of rent had the franchise. In the counties ownership of property of £5 annual value, or occupation at £12 a year were qualified. Perhaps it was not surprising that some Tory peers and commoners called this revolution.

The minimum population for two member constituencies was raised from 7,000 to 10,000 ; three members were given to four large towns and one to London University and in towns having three members each no elector might vote for more than two of them.

In a speech in Edinburgh, Disraeli said :

In a progressive country change is constant and the great question is, not whether you should resist change which is inevitable, but whether that change should be carried out in deference to the manners, the customs, the laws, the traditions of the people or in deference to abstract principles and arbitrary and general doctrines. The one is a national system ; the other, to give it an epithet, which perhaps it may deserve, is a philosophic system. Both have great advantages ; the National Party

is supported by the fervour of patriotism ; the philosophical Party has a singular exemption from the force of prejudice.

In 1868 Bills were carried for similar Reforms in Ireland and Scotland. For Ireland the Borough Franchise was lowered from £8 to £4, the £12 franchise for the counties was left unaltered, but a lodger franchise of £10 annual value was created. In Scotland, the Borough Franchise was to be extended to all householders ; the original proposition of a rating qualification was removed in Committee. The occupation franchise for counties was fixed in Committee at £14 with the alternative of ownership of land of a clear annual value of £5. Seven small English Boroughs were disfranchised and the seats given to Scotland.

A Bill arranging the boundaries of boroughs rounded off Disraeli's Reform legislation.

In 1884 the Gladstone Government embarked on a new and ambitious widening of the franchise. What Disraeli had done for the boroughs in giving them household suffrage was now to be done for the country districts. The scheme had a rough passage through the Cabinet ; the Whigs regarding so great an extension with some misgiving ; the Chamberlain Radicals demanding manhood suffrage. Gladstone thus introduced the measure :

In 1832 there was passed what was considered a Magna Charta of British liberties ; but that Magna Charta of British liberties added, according to the previous estimate of Lord John Russell, 500,000, while according to the results considerably less than 500,000 were added to the entire constituency of the three countries. After 1832, we come to 1866. At that time the total constituency of the United Kingdom reached 1,364,000. By the Bills which were passed between 1867 and 1869 that number was raised to 2,448,000. Under the action of the present law the constituency has reached in round numbers what I would call 3,000,000. This Bill . . . will add to the English constituency over 1,300,000 persons. It will add to the Scottish constituency, Scotland being at present rather better provided in this respect than either of the other countries, over

200,000, and the Irish constituency over 400,000 ; or . . . to the present aggregate constituency of the United Kingdom taken at 3,000,000, it will add 2,000,000 more, nearly twice as much as was added since 1867 and more than four times as much as was added in 1832.

The Bill had an easy passage through the Commons, but a storm rose on the question of redistribution of seats, which was to be dealt with in a separate Bill at a later date. The Conservatives made little secret of their belief that this was another trick of the Prime Minister. The idea was, they said, to hurry the Franchise Bill through, to hold an election before the redistribution of seats since, as Lord Salisbury calculated, the result would be a loss to his Party of 47 seats, counting 94 on a division, if the distribution of seats was left untouched. So in the House of Lords Cairns moved a reasoned amendment which approved of the extension of the franchise, but refused to accept a Bill "unaccompanied by provisions for so apportioning the right to return members as to ensure a true and fair representation of the people."

Forthwith, "the People" were invited to take part in the controversy though to be sure the questions really in dispute had not much to say in the matter. Here was a chance to attack the House of Lords and for the next ten weeks there was an orgy of declamation.

It was reckoned that the two Parties between them held not less than 700 meetings and that these were attended by anything between 2,000,000 and 4,000,000 of the people. Gladstone went to Edinburgh and told the electors that :

Those who are opposing us and making use of this topic of redistribution of seats as a means for defeating the Franchise Bill, know as well as we do that, had we been such idiots and such dolts as to present to Parliament a Bill for the combined purpose, or to bring in two Bills for the two purposes as one measure—I say, they know as well as we do that a disgraceful failure would have been the result of our folly, and that we should have been traitors to you, and to the cause we had in hand.

There was a "mass demonstration" in London which lacked a good deal of the impressiveness of other days and there was a remarkable disparity, ranging from 40,000 to 200,000 in the estimates of the numbers taking part. Looking back over the years it must seem that a good deal of unnecessary heat was generated, and indeed this was shown by the ease with which the question was adjusted when Salisbury went to tea with Gladstone and Gladstone discovered that the Conservative leader was far more of a Radical than himself.

Agreement was reached on the disfranchisement of all boroughs of under 15,000 inhabitants and the withdrawal of one from every two-member borough under 50,000 inhabitants. The country was cut up into single member districts of about 50,000, except in the case of old two-member boroughs of populations between 50,000 and 165,000. The City of London was cut down to two members but London generally obtained 62 members instead of 22, Manchester, with Salford, and Liverpool received nine each, Glasgow and Birmingham seven each; Ireland and Wales were allowed to keep their old membership though not strictly entitled to it.

In order to complete the story of the franchise in the 19th century I have postponed the most important Reform, in some respects, introduced, that of the introduction of voting by secret ballot. With this measure the name of George Grote must always be associated. Year after year for a generation he brought in his Bill. But voting by ballot for School Boards was included in Forster's Education Bill of 1870. A Bill providing for vote by ballot was introduced by Lord Hartington in 1870; the Bill also including the abolition of public nominations and measures for dealing with corrupt practices in Parliamentary elections. Little progress was made with it. Actually, neither of the Party leaders had a clear record on the subject. Gladstone had once been strongly

opposed to the ballot, though in 1868 in an election speech he had gone so far as to say that the matter should not be overlooked, adding that there must be security :

for perfect freedom in the giving of the vote, which vote has been not only not conferred as a favour, but imposed as a duty by the Legislature on the members of the community. I have at all times given my vote in favour of open voting, but I have done so before, and I do so now, with an important reservation, namely, that whether by open voting or by whatsoever means, free voting must be secured.

Disraeli dismissed the question as of little present interest :

There might have been a plausible case for the ballot in the past, in the days of Old Sarum and Gatton ; but now that the franchise was recognised to be a privilege and not a trust, it was a retrograde step to divorce political life from publicity.

In 1871 the Bill was reintroduced, carried through the Commons, and rejected by the Lords who saw no sign that the public was much interested in a measure which, it was declared, would certainly overthrow the Monarchy. The formidable voice of one of the greatest of American orators was imported into the discussion. Daniel Webster had warned Lord Shaftesbury :

Resist to the very last the introduction of the ballot ; for, as a Republican, I tell you that the ballot can never co-exist with monarchical institutions.

There was a certain amount of feeling in the country against the House of Lords which, however, passed the Bill when it came back on reintroduction, and so what had been one of the main points of the original People's Charter was secured at last. Yet it cannot be denied there was something of anti-climax in the final achievement, nowhere better stated than in the *Life of Grote*. At breakfast after the Bill was safely through, his wife and he discussed the matter :

"You will feel great satisfaction at seeing your once favourite measure triumph over all obstacles."

"Since the wide expansion of the voting element, I confess that the value of the ballot has sunk in my estimation. I don't, in fact, think the elections will be affected by it one way or another, as far as Party interests are concerned ! "

"Still, you will at all events get a genuine preference of the constituencies."

"No doubt, but then, again, I have come to perceive that the choice between one man and another among the English people signifies less than I used formerly to think it did. The English mind is much of one pattern, take whatsoever class you will. The same favourite prejudices, amiable and otherwise ; the same antipathies, coupled with ill-regulated though benevolent efforts to eradicate human evils are well nigh universal. A House of Commons cannot afford to be above its own constituencies in intelligence, knowledge, or patriotism."

The first Parliamentary election by ballot was the return of Mr. H. C. E. Childers at Pontefract on August 15th, 1872. For the rest one historian of the age at least thought that the Ballot Act was one of the things which decreased the popularity of Mr. Gladstone's first administration.

Thus, fifty years of progress from 1832 had added 4,000,000 men to the electorate ; the town worker and the country worker had received the franchise and it is comical now to look back on the gloomy expectations of Conservatives and old-fashioned Whigs in 1885. The "ignorant farm labourer" under the malevolent influence of Gladstone was going to ruin the country. Actually, with two short intervals in 1886 and in 1892-5, Conservative Governments were in power for more than twenty years and the agricultural districts provided the chief voting strength of the Party.

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CHAPTER X

TWENTIETH CENTURY

At the dawn of the 20th century few people can have foreseen the immediate future. The electors, especially, seemed to be satisfied with what they had gained. In September, 1900, the last autumn of the old century, the Conservatives had swept the country in what their opponents denounced as the "Khaki Election." There had been moments of consternation during the South African war, but it was believed that victory was now well within sight. Lord Salisbury, indeed, seems to have had some little doubt amidst the rejoicings of his Party. Acknowledging a letter of congratulation from an old friend, he wrote :

I am not sure whether I can consider the omens as altogether favourable. The phenomenon is without example that a Party should twice dissolve at an interval of five years, and in each case bring back a majority of more than 130. What does it mean ? I hope the causes are accidental and temporary. But it may mean that the Reform Bills, digging down deeper and deeper into the population, have come upon a layer of pure combativeness. If this is the case I am afraid the country has evil times before it. Of course, I recognise the justice of the verdict the country has just given, but that the love of justice should have overborne the great law of the pendulum, I confess puzzles and bewilders me.

Had he lived to see the great landslide of 1906, he, of all men, would not have been surprised.

The new century opened with the death of Queen Victoria and people vaguely thought that a new era was beginning, but the outward signs were not very informative. We had a more brilliant Court ; we had a Sovereign whose political inclinations were on the whole Liberal ; women lost a most determined enemy of their suffrage claim. Thirty

years earlier, on the subject of these claims, Queen Victoria had said that a young woman, born and married within the peerage, "ought to be well whipped" for her advocacy of "Women's Rights."

Fierce storms lay ahead, men were not visibly stirred by any very strong feeling that the representation of the people was insufficiently democratic, though, no doubt, the Radical section of the Liberal Party kept further reform in view as an object to be pushed forward as opportunity arrived.

It was in deference to this Radical section of the Government that further Reform was included among the less urgent matters which the Asquith Government, after 1908, put into their programme. In dealing with future legislation in the autumn of 1911, Mr. Asquith had promised that his Franchise Bill should provide opportunities for a women's suffrage amendment and that if this amendment was carried in a free division, the Government would accept it.

The position at that time was that the leaders of the Suffrage Societies which had been gathering strength since early in the century had become impatient of the periodical passage of private members' Bills through second reading and their quiet inclusion, session after session, in the annual "massacre of the innocents." From about 1905 an aggressive section headed by Mrs. Pankhurst, her daughters and others, generally highly-educated women, but drawn from all classes, began to carry on a campaign of interrupting meetings, making themselves troublesome in the Gallery of the House of Commons and so forth. As stated in a previous chapter, the inner history of the movement, its quarrels and feuds, are outside the scheme of this book, but the broad lines of the agitation may be traced.

The difficulty of advance had been that no Government would be likely to adopt Women's Suffrage because in every Party there were supporters and enemies of the idea. The Prime Minister himself was an opponent, as were several of

his colleagues. And the aggressive tactics now coming into play were much disliked by constitutional women suffragists. The public made its own distinction between suffragists and suffragettes and, as generally in this country, the popular voice was one of humorous tolerance.

The Prime Minister kept his word and it was arranged that there were to be three forms of Women's Suffrage discussed while the Suffrage Bill was going through the Commons. And in order to clear the decks, Sir Edward Grey, a Cabinet Minister who did support women's claims, moved an amendment deleting the word "male" wherever it appeared in the Bill. Then a member of each Party was to put forward one of the three schemes. The first would have enfranchised women on the same terms as men ; the second would have admitted women householders and the wives of householders on reaching the age of 25 ; the third would have admitted only women householders in their own right. But before any debate could rise in the House on these three suggestions, Bonar Law approached the Speaker and suggested that the proposed deletion of the word "male" would alter entirely the whole character of the Bill. The Speaker took time to consider, having heard also from the Prime Minister, and decided that there was a precedent for the view put forward by Bonar Law and therefore, in the last week of January, 1913, he announced that the whole Bill must be withdrawn and a new Bill drafted, since the Bill, as it stood, was concerned only with male franchise. This was fatal and the whole Bill was withdrawn though the Prime Minister promised to give facilities in the next session for any private member's Bill which might be introduced on the subject.

Naturally, there was a great storm. George Bernard Shaw accused the Speaker in the press of being "guilty not only of gross partiality but of concealing his *coup de main* from the Government until the last moment, so as to discredit them

and defeat the women at one stroke." But no one who knew Mr. Lowther would be seriously impressed by such Shavian violence.

None the less, it was not at all surprising that the militant women should believe that they had been betrayed. Their ranks were greatly swollen and the campaign grew in fury—window slashing, personal attacks by stalwart young women on defenceless elderly Ministers like Augustine Birrell, imprisonment, forcible feeding, arson, outrages in picture galleries and a dreadful incident at Epsom during the Derby. Government replied with various measures, including the Cat and Mouse Bill. Simultaneously, grave constitutional questions were under discussion, to some extent distracting the public mind from the excesses of the militants, but it is difficult to say what might have happened had not the war broken out in the summer of 1914 to change everything. The war showed women a more excellent way, and when in 1917 the Speaker's Conference took into consideration the necessity for new Reforms in the representation of the people it recognised the splendid service of women in a hundred ways during the war by proposing Household Franchise with an age limit of 30.

We come now to the fourth great Reform Act, passed in 1918 when we were still at war. This Charter of Every Man (but not yet of Every Woman) swept away in a few words all those limiting clauses for male franchise which still existed :

A man shall be entitled to be registered as a Parliamentary elector for a constituency (other than a University constituency) if he is of full age and not subject to any legal incapacity. And

- (a) Has the requisite residence qualification, or
- (b) has the requisite business premises qualification.

A man, in order to have the requisite residence qualification or business premises qualification for a constituency :

- (a) Must on the last day of the qualifying period be residing in premises

in the constituency or occupying business premises in the constituency, as the case may be. And

(b) Must during the whole of the qualifying period have resided in premises or occupied business premises, as the case may be, in the constituency or in another within the same Parliamentary Borough or Parliamentary County or contiguous thereto.

"Business premises" means land or other premises of the yearly value of not less than £10, occupied for the purpose of the business, profession or trade of the person to be registered.

A woman shall be entitled to be registered . . . if she has attained the age of 30 years and is not subject to any legal incapacity.

The qualifying period shall be a period of six months ending either on the 15th day of January or the 15th day of July, including in each case the 15th day. Every person registered as a Parliamentary elector shall be entitled to vote at an election of a member of Parliament for that constituency, but a man shall not vote at a General Election for more than one constituency for which he is registered by virtue of residence qualification or for more than one constituency in which he is registered by virtue of any other qualification.

There was a special clause making it possible for Service men engaged, or having been engaged, in the war of 1914-18 and having reached the age of 19 at the commencement of his service or having attained it during his service to vote in an election if otherwise qualified.

It was laid down that all candidates must deposit £150 to be forfeited if the candidate did not poll one-eighth of all the votes cast. Agents' fees were fixed at a maximum of £75 for counties and £50 for boroughs, while the candidate might spend at the rate of 7d. and 5d. an elector respectively.

A clause provided tentatively for a scheme of Proportional Representation if such was deemed advisable. The use of P.R. in University elections is dealt with elsewhere.

An important change was that which ordered that all polls should be taken on the same day. In 1884, Canon Dodgson wrote in the *St. James' Gazette* on the subject of Parlia-

mentary elections in the course of which he pointed out that there were many people and many constituencies which liked to be on the winning side and that after the first few days of a General Election "one side or the other has generally got a more or less decided advantage and a weak-kneed constituency was sorely tempted to swell the tide of victory."

But this is not all ; the evil extends further than to the single constituency ; nay, it extends further than to a single General Election ; it constitutes a feature in our national history ; it is darkly ominous for the future of England. So long as General Elections are conducted as at present we shall be liable to oscillations of political power, like those of 1874 and 1880, but of ever-increasing violence. One Parliament wholly at the mercy of one political Party, the next wholly at the mercy of the other—while the Government of the hour, joyfully hastening to undo all that its predecessor has done will wield a majority so immense that the fate of every question will be foredoomed and debate will be a farce.

Whether or not the writer's gloomy expectations have been verified, the suggestions he made for a better system have, to a large extent, been adopted.

The tendency over a long period had been to pile as many as possible of the actual expenses of the poll on to the candidate. Thus the cost of the hustings had been defrayed by the candidate and there were various other charges which the returning officer was entitled to make and these put a heavy burden on candidates of small means. The Act of 1918, while imposing the deposit obligation already described, returnable except when the candidate failed to poll one-eighth of the total votes recorded, swept away all other charges and made the cost of holding elections a matter for the State. Not that this was any special gain for the electors.

Registration also was put at last on a satisfactory basis, at least in theory, for there were some uncomfortable revelations of error at the time of the election of 1945. But the Act laid it down that it should be the duty of an appointed officer in each constituency to prepare a register twice in

every year. The office of Revising Barrister was now abolished and the registration officer was to consider claims and objections with a right of appeal from him to the County Court and to the Appeal Court though, in this case, on questions of law only. The redistribution, involving a periodical effort to equalise constituencies took away the separate franchise from 44 boroughs, many of them of great antiquity, but the result, as a whole, was an addition of 37 members to the House of Commons, making the total 707.

But only for a short time for, under the Treaty of 1922, the position of Ireland was radically changed. Fortunately, we need not follow the tragic story, but the Treaty which set up Eire and divided Ireland between North and South was a compromise carried through the Dail by a narrow majority. In December, 1921, Articles of Agreement passed both Houses and the Conservative Government elected in this country in 1922 enacted the Free State Constitution Bill. Mr. de Valera remained hostile till he gave up the struggle in March, 1923. There was still the question of the Northern Ireland boundary, but eventually the Free State gave up its claim to Tyrone and Fermanagh in consideration of valuable financial relief. The membership of the Parliament of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was thus reduced to 615.

The Fifth Reform Act of 1928 did away altogether with sex distinction and added the qualification of "husband or wife" of a person occupying business premises as laid down previously. The Parliament Act of 1911 had reduced the life of Parliaments to a maximum of five years and the Blind Voters' Act of 1933 went far to completing the business of Reform.

If I have made no more than a mention of the Parliament Act of 1911, it is because, though it involved the most important Constitutional questions and included an appeal to the people, it was not with the question of the Representation of the People that it was concerned, but

rather with the relations between the two Houses of Parliament. Since 1911 M.P.'s have been paid.

Thus we have a franchise open to all men and women of full age with the life of a Parliament reduced from seven to five years, so that in normal circumstances there should be a General Election every four years, since there is a convention against allowing Parliaments to run their full course.

Mention has been made already of the loss of the right to vote by "legal incapacity." Citizens lose the right by mental incapacity, by a Peerage, by the holding of certain offices (such as Returning Officer) and by conviction for treason or felony or for certain electoral offences.

In earlier chapters some description has been given of the elector's part in elections before the passing of the Ballot Act of 1872. It must not be supposed that bribery and corruption ceased with the First Reform Act. When we come to election petitions we shall see that some very bad cases of corruption came to light long after 1832, but there is no doubt that the Ballot Act, if it did not entirely eliminate bribery and corruption, as indeed is shown by the passing of subsequent Acts of Parliament, it did alter the elector's share in the proceedings by the disappearance of public nomination, of the riotous scenes at the hustings and of the long period during which the polls were kept open, generally a saturnalia for the public.

Let us glance at modern electoral methods. There is an old story of a hunting parson discovered in a ditch during a run, and a suggestion to stop and offer help being met by, "Oh, he's all right ; he won't be wanted till Sunday." It is rather in this spirit that the modern elector regards the duty, privilege, or right (whichever we prefer) of the franchise between elections and those who have worked actively in a modern constituency are apt to find that their well-meant efforts are resented by the Free and Independent. None the less, in a well-managed constituency all Parties keep some organisa-

tion in being between elections and do their best to enthuse the electors. In such cases, it might be said that, as soon as an election has been won or lost, a new one begins.

Attempts are being made, both officially and by local organisations to decrease the cost, not only of fighting an election but of preparing for it, because the costlier a constituency the narrower is the field of choice of candidates, though here, generally, the Labour Party has an advantage over its two older rivals. The modern practice favours the plan of raising money by national subscriptions but, even so, a certain amount of money is required year by year and week by week from the electors themselves within the constituency.

A favourite method of raising money is by fêtes or bazaars ; often there will be a single large fête for the whole constituency at which the general enjoyment will be interrupted (in the view, one fears, of a good many of those present) by a speech from the member or prospective candidate, supported, if possible, by some member of the Front Bench of the Party concerned. These fêtes are run by a committee drawn from the constituency, but the real directing influence is the agent, who generally has a personal interest, since it is by these fêtes that some part at least of his salary is secured.

It is part of the convention of electioneering that when a seat is won for one side or the other unexpectedly, it will be described as a triumph for the successful candidate, whereas in sober truth, the praise ought to go to the agent, for it is a good agent who wins an election, whereas a bad one may lose one. Agents have been part of the electoral machine for a very long period, but it is perhaps from the Reform of the Conservative Party machine by Disraeli and of the Liberal Party machine by Joseph Chamberlain that the development of the highly-trained agent can be traced. In much more recent times it has become customary to assist the agent by the appointment of a Woman Organiser, who deals with

questions affecting female voters but acts generally as a second-in-command, though nowadays women agents are not uncommon. The agent is the commander-in-chief in local organisation. This is not to disparage the activities of constituency chairmen and executives who, however, are generally busy in other directions and rarely expert in election law and practice.

The agent must have every detail of the requirements of electoral law, less complicated now than in the past, at his finger tips. He must be a person of infinite tact and infinite patience. Anyone who has had to rely on voluntary help in any activity whatever will agree that the two qualities just mentioned are indispensable to success. There are few creatures rarer than voluntary helpers who can forget their voluntary status and be ready to do punctually what they are told. The agent must also be a first-class beggar, for the chances are that the money that can be extracted from local associations, to which we shall come presently, will be quite insufficient for the needs of the constituency ; it is he who must wheedle the large cheques from unwilling pockets.

It has to be remembered that in many constituencies the older plan was that local magnates of the two old Parties found the money and chose their own candidates. We have seen already how in Yorkshire a candidate spoke of himself as having been "elected in Lord Fitzwilliam's dining room," and this system died hard even with Reform. But the fall in land values which coincided in the eighteen-seventies with the overhaul of political machines has produced by degrees the present democratic system of choice and election in the older Parties which has existed to a large extent from the outset in the Labour Party.

Each of the Parties in a modern constituency has a local association in each ward or division of a constituency. The members of the Association, who are supposed to pay a small annual subscription, sometimes fixed, sometimes left

to the generosity of the individual, elect a Committee and this Committee, in turn, sends a delegate or delegates to the Executive Committee of the constituency.

As a rule, especially in the case of the older Parties, who have never organised this important business as precisely as the Labour Party, the local subscriptions are collected by volunteers and a thankless task these volunteers have, especially in those suburban districts from which so many Parliamentary electors are drawn. Something like this is apt to happen. The voluntary collector gives up his Saturday or his evenings to the task. He congratulates himself on having caught an acquaintance whose car is waiting at his door ; he will not have to ring the bell and be eyed by a supercilious maid. The owner of the car emerges complete with golf bag. "Hullo, X, what's your trouble ?" The collector, with a false air of confidence, remarks that he doesn't seem to have paid his subscription for some time and he'd better pay up. The other becomes petulant at once. "'Pon my word, you fellows never leave a chap alone, might think I was made of money. And what good does your beastly Association do anyhow ? Look at the Income Tax ! Oh well, what is the bally subscription ? Five bob ? What on earth do you do with the money ?" With a very bad grace he may produce two half-crowns, or more probably one ; he will then go off and have half a sovereign on his game and another on the bye ; will repeat the process in the afternoon and will finish up with bridge at fairly high stakes. His day's amusement will have cost him a good deal, but the only item he will regret will be the subscription to his local political association.

As a rule, local Association Committees are very unwilling to hand over money they have collected to the central fund. There will always be someone on the committee who cannot understand why money is needed between elections.

Then there is canvassing ; in the old days canvassing was a

very important feature of electioneering and consisted very often in hard bargaining about the cash value of a vote. Effective canvassing must be limited nowadays by the size of the constituency. When constituencies were counted by hundreds instead of thousands, things were very different. There was an Irish member who evolved a very businesslike system. He would drive about his constituency in hired cars eliciting from the driver every bit of gossip that was going. He kept a regular ledger into which all the information he got was entered under appropriate headings so that he could amaze his constituents and preserve their loyalty by his knowledge of their families and all that concerned them. But today a wise old agent remarked to me that the only real use of canvassing was to find out your steady adherents so as to be able to make sure of getting them to the poll.

But the chances are that in every election there will be enthusiastic young women who, with misty ideas about the Duchess of Devonshire, volunteer to canvass. The wise agent will humour them because, after some rebuffs, they may be ready to undertake less spectacular but more useful tasks. They may perhaps bring home glowing accounts of their work, from which it will emerge that they have done perhaps half a dozen houses in a road, their chief trophy being old Mr. So and So, who is really "quite an intelligent old fellow; he wanted to argue at first, but I think I persuaded him; I must have talked to him for an hour." The agent, who knows that old Mr. So and So is a stalwart of the other Party who enjoys wasting the time of canvassers, congratulates her gravely, assures her that the old gentleman will be brought safely to the poll and everybody is satisfied.

But it would be hopeless to attempt a modern election without the help of those many women of all ages who will go anywhere and do anything, who will work for bazaars, who will improvise refreshments for local meetings, who will undertake all the drudgery of addressing envelopes and

a dozen other unspectacular but indispensable things, besides making effective speeches, often in the open air.

From the moment that the election begins and the candidate's address has been scrutinised and agreed, little or nothing about politics will be heard in the discussions between the agent and his principal helpers. All their time will be taken up with organisation and that agent will be fortunate who has a reliable aide who can set him free for his special duties, such as nursing the candidate and seeing that neither the candidate nor enthusiastic helpers do anything which may invalidate the election. He will have made a complete list of meetings for every day of the last stages ; he will detail someone to see that the schoolrooms and so on booked are in order and the speakers on time ; he will be accessible to everyone who matters and will be able to dispose of bores without giving offence ; by some second sight he will manage to be in any part of the division where he is urgently needed and whether on polling day he has won or lost, he will be prepared to begin all over again the day after.

In all this, little mention has been made of the candidate. If he is the late member and has not made himself too unpopular to be adopted again, his choice becomes a formality for the Divisional Executive Committee. If the late member belonged to the other side the time will come, perhaps years before the election, when a prospective candidate must be chosen. The central offices of the Parties have lists of people anxious, or willing, to stand and from these lists Divisional Executives make the final choice, a choice, unfortunately, often dictated by the amount of money which the candidate is prepared to spend on organisation and election expenses, at least in the older Parties. Lately, however, things have been moving healthily towards an ideal in which choice would be made on no other ground than belief in the suitability of the candidate as a representative of any particular division.

The task before a candidate is no easy one, even if he has the best of agents. Few people will escape the feeling of satiety after meeting the same people, listening to, and indeed making, the same speeches, remembering faces, trying to say the right thing to the right person, achieving the kind of retort to hecklers which sets a meeting laughing at the heckler's expense. He will grow to hate the very sight of the portable rostrum from which he will have to address open-air meetings in outlying parts of the constituency. No doubt he is recompensed for all this if he wins ; if he loses he can only hope that the experience will have been useful for the "next time."

GENERAL ELECTIONS—1833-1945

1833	W.	307	1874	C.	46	1918	Co.	263
1835	W.	107	1880	L.	62	1922	C.	79
1837	W.	51	1885	L.	166	1923		
1841	C.	81	1886	C.	114	1924	C.	225
1847	W.	1	1892	L.	40	1929		
1852	L.	13	1895	C.	152	1931	N.	425
1857	L.	79	1900	C.	134	1935	N.	247
1859	L.	43	1906	L.	356	1945	LAB.	186
1865	L.	67	1910	L.	124			
1868	L.	128	1910	L.	126			

MAJORITIES

W=Whig. L.=Liberal. C.=Conservative or Unionist. LAB.=Labour.
Co.=Coalition. N.=National.

Liberal majority, 1885, included Irish Nationalists.

In 1910 there were elections in January and December.

In 1923 and 1929 no clear majority, but Labour took Office.

CHAPTER XI

ELECTION PETITIONS

FROM 1604 to 1708 Petitions on the subject of disputed elections were heard by Committees of Privileges and Elections. These reported their decisions to the House of Commons, which could then accept them or reject them. But in 1708 a Committee, appointed to look into the question of a speedy determination of disputed elections recommended "that all matters which shall come in question touching returns of elections shall in the future be heard at the Bar of the House." But this plan was not always followed and the old Committees of Privileges and Elections often heard petitions, a vote of the House deciding which plan was to be adopted. In those days election petitions were numerous and the greater part of the first session of a new Parliament might be taken up in hearing them. Often it suited Ministers very well that they should be heard at the Bar of the House, which was thus prevented from meddling in other matters.

But in 1770 what was known as the Grenville Act directed against malpractices made a change, carried in the teeth of Court and Ministers, and Hatsell, the most famous of Clerks at the Table before Erskine May, declared the Act to be :

One of the noblest works for the honour of the House of Commons and the security of the constitution that was ever devised by any minister or statesman.

It is not necessary to give at length the rather complicated system introduced by the Act, but its effect was to choose a committee from a list of 49 members secured by ballot from a quorum of 100. Then Counsel for the petitioner and the sitting member each named one member of the committee

and the parties alternatively struck off members of the 49 till the number had been reduced to 13 who, with the two nominated members, constituted a committee. This did not secure impartiality because, in spite of orders to the contrary, there was active canvassing to induce members to be present or absent when the original ballot was taken. However, the Act, with some amendment, survived till 1868 when the whole business of Election Petitions was transferred to the judges of the King's Bench or to Commissioners specially appointed.

Naturally, the Grenville Act was disliked by those who stood by the old system of corruption. One of them went so far as to say in the House that he disliked the Act because it stopped treating and the only person who objected to treating was a stingy candidate who wanted to save his money. But Samuel Johnson wrote a pamphlet in the course of which he praised the Act :

A disputed election is now tried with the same scrupulousness and solemnity as any other title. A candidate, that has deserved well of his neighbours, may now be certain of enjoying the effect of their approbation ; and the elector, who has voted honestly for known merit, may be certain that he has not voted in vain.

The first Committee appointed under the Act designed to bring about pure elections reported on a contest in the Borough of New Shoreham in November, 1770. There were two candidates, a Nabob and a Caribbee, in other words, men who had made their fortunes in the East and West Indies respectively. It came out later that there was at Shoreham a company founded originally to promote ship-building. About the end of 1764 the company transformed itself into the "Christian Club," all the members of which were sworn to be "steadfast, true and silent." The members included a majority of the Borough voters ; and on the eve of an election the club made its bargain with one candidate or the other for a lump sum which was to be divided only

after the contest among the members and this enabled them to take the bribery oath when voting, for they could say that they had not received a farthing for their votes. Burke and others denounced this shameful business. Burke declared :

I am shocked at the wisdom to be found in these transactions. I am shocked at the virtue ; at the principles of honour and trust on which these men acted ; principles deserving a better cause. It is a wasp's nest ; most curiously constructed but still a wasp's nest ; and as such must be destroyed.

In 1774 when it was said that a vote was worth £30 at Ilchester there were petitions and counter-petitions by the four candidates, but the petitions, when they came before the committee, only brought out the fact that both sides had bribed recklessly and the election was declared void. But the period of the Grenville Act was generally one of high prices in electioneering. Lord Chesterfield, for instance, explained to young Stanhope, that he had been trying to provide him with a seat in the Commons :

I spoke to a Borough jobber and offered five and twenty hundred pounds for a secure seat in Parliament ; but he laughed at my offer, and said that there was no such thing as a Borough to be had now for the rich East and West Indians had secured them all, at the rate of three thousand pounds at least but many at four thousand, and two or three that he knew at five thousand. This, I confess, has vexed me a good deal.

In 1774 there was the case of Hindon in Wiltshire. "The right of election lay with inhabitants of houses within the Borough, being housekeepers and parishioners, not securing alms." There was a petition by the unsuccessful candidate on the ground of bribery. When the petition was heard it came out that the majority of the voters had been bribed all round, and thirteen electors, acting as agents, had been doing the bribery. The committee disfranchised these thirteen, but a Bill was also ordered to disfranchise 190 persons (in addition to the thirteen) out of 210 who had voted. Eventually, all

the petitions were dropped and two new writs issued. Meanwhile, the Attorney General proceeded against the four candidates under the common law with the result that the two petitioners were acquitted and the two who had been elected were committed till the following term to the King's Bench prison. One of them was again returned for Hindon at the new election, but they were both fined and sentenced to short terms of imprisonment.

In the case of some petitioners it was violence and intimidation that were alleged rather than bribery. Two candidates named Delmé and Byron had, it was alleged, a majority of the votes at Morpeth.

The Returning Officers were compelled to return Delmé and Eyre; and it was also proved that, on the morning of the election, before it began, Eyre made an inflammatory speech to the people; that after the riot began, he having retired some time before, the returning officers sent him



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ESSEX CALVES

word they would return whom he pleased, and that an answer being brought them, that they must return himself and Mr. Delmé, they complied and the riot ceased. Though it was alleged that Byron had been bribing the electors, it was decided that he must be declared elected.

Various names or aliases were assumed by the people actually employed in corruption. Thus, in a case of a controverted election to the Borough of Shaftesbury in 1774, a

good deal was heard of a certain "Punch," described as concealing himself "under a ludicrous and fantastical disguise." He took up his position in a small room and, through a hole in the door, distributed packets containing twenty guineas. The recipient voters were then taken to another room in the same house where "Punch's secretary" took from them signed notes for the money, which were made payable to an imaginary character named "Glentucket." Counsel for the petitioner called two witnesses who said that they had spied through the hole in the door and recognised "Punch" as a Shaftesbury Alderman. Eventually, the committee turned out the two sitting members as not duly elected, so that the efforts of "Punch," said to have represented several thousand pounds on their behalf, were wasted.

Innumerable instances could be quoted, but it would be a mistake to suppose that all this bribery and corruption came to an end with the passing of the first Reform Act or even with that of the Ballot Act, forty years later. Both after the 1865 election before the Ballot Act and in that of 1880, eight years after, there were numerous cases of corrupt elections and it was necessary to pass a more stringent Act against bribery in the eighteen eighties.

Thus elections for Ludlow, Cambridge, Derby, Gloucester, Wakefield, Great Yarmouth, Totnes, Lancaster, Reigate, Sudbury, and St. Albans, were the subject of petitions between 1835 and 1866. The sort of thing that went on at the 1865 election is amusingly described in the *Reminiscences of Sir Henry Hawkins* in an election which did not involve a petition. At that time Boroughs were still to be purchased, and a friend of Hawkins told him that he had been told that the small Borough of Totnes in Devon could be won, but that the lowest figure required as an opening instalment would be £7,000. However, in 1865, Hawkins was approached by an "influential deputation" with a largely-signed requisition asking him to stand for one of the seats

at Barnstaple. He was received enthusiastically, but presently it began to appear that, if he hoped to win the seat, the mere influence of a sound programme and a careful canvass was not likely to avail him :

I was told that a very different kind of influence prevailed in the Borough than that of religion or political morality, and that it would be perfectly hopeless to expect to win the seat unless I was prepared to purchase a large majority of electors. Indeed, that I must buy almost every voter . . . It was said that they were such free and independent electors that they would vote for either Party, and you could not be sure of them until the last moment ; in fact, if I would win, I must bribe.

He continued to be cheered to the echo and when the polling began he was pleasantly surprised to find that he was getting a good many votes, but when work ceased about midday and "the whole body of bribed voters were released from work," he soon found himself at the bottom of the poll ; the candidates on the other side having had no scruples on the subject of £5 notes.

There was no lack of bribery at many places during that election and, as disclosures were made, public feeling was considerably stirred and many letters appeared in the newspapers expressing disgust and reprobation of the practices disclosed. Some, however, asked what more was to be expected when a man who cared nothing about Politics and Parties found that he could get himself out of pecuniary trouble by selling himself to the highest bidder. Government Commissions respecting bribery were held at Great Yarmouth, Totnes, Lancaster, and Reigate, and shocking evidence was given. It was probably due to all this that the new system was established in 1868 when the Parliamentary Elections Act secured that election petitions should be tried by a Court appointed for the purpose and there is now an Election Petitions Office with a rota of judges to hear cases as they occur. The disclosures also contributed, no doubt, to the passage of the Ballot Act in 1872.

But the Ballot Act was very far from stopping bribery and corruption at elections. Indeed, election petitions were regarded as being among the most lucrative for the Inns of Court. Here, for instance, is Hawkins on the subject :

One day, Baron Martin asked me if I was coming to such and such an election petition.

"No," I answered ; "I have put a prohibitory fee on my services ; I can't be bothered with election petitions."

"How much have you put on ?"

"Five hundred guineas and two hundred a day."

The Baron laughed heartily. "A prohibitory fee ? They must have you. Put on what you like ; Make it high enough, and they'll have you all the more."

Hawkins adds that the Judge was quite right and that his electioneering experiences and expenses at Barnstaple turned out to be a very good investment.

As has been said, the Ballot Act did not put an end to bribery and corruption. Indeed, some of the worst cases were disclosed at the election of 1880. There was Oxford City, for instance, where Sir William Harcourt, who was to be Home Secretary in Gladstone's Government, was beaten. The Oxford electors at that time had not a good reputation and "beer and mob rule" were represented as the leading characteristics of elections there. But in the election of 1880 the outpouring of beer may well have surpassed all previous records and Harcourt was beaten by 54 votes. But his friends avenged him by a petition, heard by two judges, who used language of the utmost severity about some of the things which came to light. The expenses of the winning candidate were returned at £3,610, but were found to have been in truth no less than £5,661, to which must be added £1,896 representing outstanding claims. Moreover, there was produced at the petition a letter purporting to have been written by the Chichele Professor to the Public Orator of the University. The evidence was that this had been picked up

in the street and handed to the Mayor. It stated that the side opposed to Harcourt was sure to win, if only another £500 could be obtained in addition to the £3,000 sent down by the Carlton Club. Three hundred had been raised, the Professor was good for another £50, could the Public Orator subscribe £10? It is not surprising perhaps that in view of all this the City was partly disfranchised, Harcourt's opponent being unseated and the seat left unfilled.

But Oxford was by no means the only offender in the election of 1880, for petitions were being heard all over the country and several other elected members were unseated. Turning over the pages which record the hearing of some of these petitions, one is struck by the complete shamelessness of agents and electors alike. In one case, for instance, the Commissioners extracted from the agent of one of the parties a description of the way in which he was accustomed to go to work.

As soon as the register was available, he set to work to extract from it names of people who might, he thought, be influenced. He then proceeded to get acquainted with them and, having done so, to introduce the subject of politics. If he found that they were keen Party men he let them be, but if he found that they had no Party and did not care which side won, he concluded that these were the people on whom £10 or less might usefully be spent.

Many methods of influence were disclosed. In one case, the Commissioners gave a good deal of attention to the fact that an elected candidate had employed 553 messengers and 359 clerks, which seemed rather a large outlay since all were paid and they ranged from small children to very old men. Presumably, it was thought not impossible that the parents of the children would be suitably grateful.

There was a further question about a number of "roughs" employed to act as garrison of the committee rooms. The member explained with spirit that this had been a very

necessary precaution since "the enemy" had three times attacked the committee rooms. But, he was asked, how did it happen that members of the garrison appeared to have spent so much of their time "riding about in cabs"? To this, it was replied that there was reason to think that guards would be needed.

At Gloucester it was enquired what would be the normal result of a perfectly pure Parliamentary election and it was suggested that there might be a Liberal win by about 200 votes. So then, it was calculated, if there were 300 corruptible voters on the register, the result of election would be in their hands. The Mayor was asked whether he could suggest anything to put down corruption and he replied that he could make only two suggestions; one was that constituencies should be made so large as to make it impossible to manipulate an election, and the other was a Bribery Act of greater stringency to deal with candidates, bribers and bribed alike.

One of the things which emerged from various enquiries at the time was that the great object of many electors was to extract money from both sides and this must actually have been more easy under the Ballot Act.

There were comical stories of the exertions of City Fathers. One elector was being shepherded to the poll when he and his escort were waylaid by an Alderman and a struggle ensued in which the Alderman was worsted, whereupon the man's wife, who had come up, roundly abused his escort, telling him that, if her husband had been allowed to go with the Alderman, he would have brought some money home with him. Not unnaturally, the political activities of members of town and city Corporations have bulked largely in the history of election petitions. There was a case at Shrewsbury, about seventy-five years ago, which employed the leading Silks of the day—Hardinge Gifford (Lord Halsbury) and Sergeant Ballantine. The case turned a good deal on the

fact that whereas the town itself had a Liberal leaning, certain members of the Corporation who took a leading part in its affairs were ardent Conservatives and not very particular about the means they employed to secure the seat for their Party. Thus there was much made of what was called the Dun Cow supper. The proprietor of that inn was a strong Conservative. At his house a certain landlord was in the habit of entertaining his tenants annually. Sergeant Ballantine, in his most impressive manner, pointed out that :

It was an extraordinary thing that the liberality of landlords became very great when an election was taking place . . . The supper had been arranged to take place on the eve of the Parliamentary contest. The invitation was accompanied by the shaking of a bag of money in the tenants' faces and such an effect had the bag of money, the meal, or some mysterious influence on the company that, though it was composed of a number of persons who had always voted Liberal, all present were suddenly seized with the determination to support the Conservative

It was the experience which Mr. Gladstone gained when member for Newark that, after an interval of fifty years, influenced him to pass through Parliament the measure which did most to put down corruption at elections. "Of all the measures that he was destined in days to come to place upon the Statute Book, none was more salutary than the law that purified corrupt practices at elections." St. John Brod-rick (Lord Midleton) entered the House of Commons in 1880, and of his first election he says :

It is noteworthy that our chief expense was due to our agents having, according to the custom of the day, engaged every conveyance in the Division for the day of the poll, in order to ensure our voters reaching the limited number of polling places and the creation of a corresponding difficulty for our opponents. These and similar manoeuvres were properly frustrated by the Corrupt Practices Act of 1884 which limited the expense of elections ; defined proper expenditure and put an end for ever to such a grievous orgy as that which made the unsuccessful

candidate who polled a few hundred votes in the Cinque Ports election some years before spend £18,000 without even the compensation of securing the seat.

It was not until 1918 that a General Election was fought without a single resulting petition.

It would be a mistake, however, to assume that election petitions originated only in allegations of bribery and corruption. As may have been gathered from the opening chapters of this book many complications arose from doubts as to the eligibility of those claiming to vote and it was only as the result of a series of petitions over a period of many years that doubts and difficulties were dispersed. Only in our time has complete simplicity about the use of the franchise been attained.

Apart from this, petitions often originated in the honest actions of zealous politicians, for if there have always been in the past, bribery and corruption, there have also been large numbers of honest and devoted partisans who required no corrupt stimulus. These the people like the old Whig magnate who warned his grandson (in a phrase not unknown today), "Never trust a Tory." If in their zeal some ardent spirits have transgressed, perhaps we should remember the words of Sir Edward Seymour, Speaker and proudest Commoner in England, "If the Lord should be extreme to mark what was done amiss by us in the matter of elections here, the Lord have mercy on us all."

CHAPTER XII

UNIVERSITY ELECTIONS

THE two ancient Universities of Oxford and Cambridge obtained by Charter the right to send two burgesses each to the House of Commons in 1603, the grant being made by King James I, on the advice of Burleigh and Coke. By the terms of the Charter a University was empowered to :

Elect and nominate two of the more discreet and sufficient men of the University for the time being to be burgesses of the Parliament and the said burgesses so elected at the charge and cost of the Chancellor, masters and students to send to Parliament in the like manner and form as in other places . . . of England . . . to be present and stay all through the Parliament as other burgesses and to have voices as well affirmative as negative and to do and execute all and singular other things there as freely as other burgesses would do.

Their wage was to be five shillings a day.

Almost from the outset the two Universities became a power in the land, politically as well as intellectually, for both "meddled in politics" from an early stage as in this warning to Oxford's young Tories :

University electors will become Mobbish and Popular and the Sacred Place where Peace and Order ought to reign and Unanimity in good principles ought most eminently to shine (both for its own Glory and Example to others) will be converted into no better than a Country Corporation and Strife, Envy, Hatred and Contention will rove about like devouring Lions ; Order and Government will be no more but everyone will do what is righteous in his own Eyes. If once the younger Unthinking Part of the University (the younger graduates) meet with Success against the Governors, they, like a furious Horse, will soon feel their own Strength and throw off all Submission and consequently Opposition and Rebellion will be their first Principle. Moreover, 'tis

more than probable that the Squadron of Whigs if they go together will turn the Election . . . We may entirely lose the University and in time a Whig may have as good a chance to succeed as a Tory.

Language like this is hardly suggestive of level heads and thoughtful minds. Indeed it was soon complained that political rancour was taking the place of "Christian Doctrines."

Macaulay claimed for the Universities that in the latter part of the century in which they received their franchise their power reached its greatest height.

None of the neighbouring countries could boast of such splendid and opulent seats of learning. The schools of Edinburgh and Glasgow, of Leyden and Utrecht, of Louvain and Leipzig, of Padua and Bologna, seemed mean to scholars who had been educated in the magnificent foundations of Wykeham and Wolsey, of Henry VI and Henry VIII. Literature and science were, in the academical system of England, surrounded with pomp, armed with magistracy, and closely allied with all the most august institutions of the State.

Both had been devoted to the Stuart cause ; both had given most of their gold and silver to that cause ; both had been harshly treated by the Puritans ; both had welcomed the Restoration with delight. But in the reign of James II that loyalty was to be sorely tried and both Universities suffered alike.

From that time a divergence could be traced in their political leaning. It is much too great a simplification to say that Oxford was Tory and Cambridge Whig ; it would be nearer the truth to describe Oxford as Jacobite and Cambridge as Hanoverian. But both might be described as political.

From the first, members could be chosen only from the University body. It was customary in the past for members of the University to write the name of their chosen candidate on a slip of paper which they handed to the Returning

Officer, always the Vice-Chancellor, but a famous anecdote makes it clear that they also voted verbally at Oxford. We shall come later to variations in the original voting scheme.

There was no doubt about the Jacobite leanings of Oxford in Hanoverian days, though there were some anti-Jacobite colleges at Oxford throughout, such as Wadham, Exeter, Merton, and others, but there were very unbecoming ebullitions of feeling against the first two Georges. The elder Pitt told the House of Commons that he had seen in an Oxford shop window a portrait of a young man in Highland costume with a blue riband and a motto that left no doubt of the disloyal sentiments thus flagrantly displayed. And in what has been called his best effort in Parliamentary humour, he went on to recall how he had seen a hen which had been set on duck's eggs watching with horror its fledglings making for the nearest water. That hen, it appeared, was, the venerable University of Oxford.

A hackneyed exchange of epigrams summed up the situation :

Our Royal Master saw with heedful eyes
The wants of his two Universities ;
Troops he to Oxford sent, as knowing why
That learned Body wanted Loyalty ;
Books he to Cambridge gave, as well discerning
That that right loyal Body wanted learning.

The volley from Oxford soon drew a counter-offensive :

The King to Oxford sent his troop of horse,
For Tories own no argument but force ;
With equal care to Cambridge books he sent,
For Whigs allow no force but argument.

The two Universities have sent many distinguished statesmen to Parliament and each has two Prime Ministers among its representatives. Pitt and Palmerston were members for Cambridge ; Peel and Gladstone for Oxford, though it has

to be added that, of the four, Pitt alone was not discarded by his University.

Let us take Cambridge first. William Pitt was a very young man when he first stood for the University and his debut was by no means encouraging. Born in 1759 he stood for the University in September, 1780, and was at the bottom of the poll. However, through the good offices of the Duke of Rutland, he became for a time one of "Lowther's Ninepins," one of the nine members whom the future Lord Lonsdale returned to the House of Commons. But it was different when he stood again in 1784, being then Prime Minister ; not unnaturally, the University returned him at the top of the poll, bringing his colleague in with him.

Palmerston's experiences at Cambridge were decidedly varied. He, too, began early, for he was only twenty-two when he first stood for Cambridge. He was beaten then and again in 1807, but was elected in 1811. He held the seat till 1831, not always easily, and we have his own account of the hard work he put in in 1825. He was then still a Tory, but of the four candidates of the following year he alone was in favour of relief of Catholic disabilities. And this election was the first decided step in his change of politics. His canvass lasted actually from November, 1825, to June, 1826.

I do not hurry but let every man talk his fill and many have much to say about the Catholic question and I encourage them to open their mouths and state all their objections because it gives me an opportunity of explaining my views which are more rational than some of them fancy, and of suggesting answers to some of their arguments which may give them matter for reflection.

All very well for a University constituency, but hardly practicable in the rush and hurry of the ordinary popular election of today ! And even so, Palmerston wrote that it became "a most laborious task for my friends and myself." He was elected in 1826, but when he stood again in 1831 he

was at the bottom of the poll and left Cambridge alone for the rest of his long life.

Of Oxford's effect on the political principles of those who graduated there, Burnet took a very low view, though the home of High Church and High Toryism could hardly have been expected to find favour in the eyes of a Low Church Whig Bishop.

Universities, Oxford especially, have been very unhappily successful in corrupting the principles of those who are sent to be bred among them so that few of them escape the taint of it and the generality of the clergy are not only ill-principled but ill-tempered.

However, we may leave the days when the health of King James III was toasted in Oxford colleges and King George's birthday disrespectfully remembered, and pass on to the 19th century when Mr. Speaker Abbot provided the University with a member entirely to its taste. But there came a time when it was persistently rumoured that he was likely to retire from the Chair and go to the Lords. George Canning approached Abbot several times with the suggestion that he would like the reversion of the seat ; Abbot put him off and Canning was a man suspect in high Tory circles, as he was considered unsafe on the question of Catholic Emancipation, which was to play a tragic part in the history of the seat for some years. Indeed, it troubled all policy over a generation. George III had set his face against any relaxation of the practical exclusion of Roman Catholics from public life and this was one of the few questions on which George IV was believed to hold conscientious scruples. Lord Eldon was an important factor in Oxford politics and his influence was thrown against any invitation to Canning and in favour of Peel, understood to be an unbending "Protestant." So Peel was preferred and held the seat from 1817 to 1829. He had the warm support also of the retiring member.

But the time came when Peel was converted and himself moved the repeal of the Acts which constituted Catholic

disability. Ministers might change, the Duke of Wellington might issue his orders to the House of Lords "to right about turn," but the University of Oxford stood its ground and Peel resigned and offered himself for re-election to give his constituents their chance of turning him out. At first it seemed possible that Peel might be returned after all, for the Dean of Christ Church, urged by Abbot (now Lord Colchester) to replace him, said that while he would not himself nominate Peel, there was no one else "started or likely to be." But 74 prominent members of the University issued a manifesto declaring Peel "unfit to be re-elected."

So Sir Robert Inglis was put up and elected by 755 votes to 609, and Peel's supporters had to content themselves with an analysis of the voting, which showed that he had the brains of the University on his side. The result was summarised in Colchester's Diary :

Cheers for Eldon in Convocation. Hisses for the King, hisses and groans for Peel. The King's private Chaplain went up to vote against Peel.

Peel had to take refuge in the somewhat malodorous Borough of Westbury under the banner of that Sir Manasseh Lopez, of whom we have heard in connection with Grampound.

Sir Robert Inglis was still a member for the University when, in 1847, he obtained as colleague Peel's political godson, William Ewart Gladstone. Oxford was never a safe seat in Gladstone's tenure of it, lasting 18 years. On this occasion he noted :

It was a serious campaign . . . It was fought and fiercely on religious grounds. There was an incessant discussion or I may say dissection, of my character and position in reference to the Oxford Movement. This cut very deep . . . the Liberals supported me gallantly, so did many zealous churchmen, apart from politics, and a good number of moderate men so that I was returned by a fair majority

There were three candidates. Inglis was perfectly safe and headed the poll with 1,700 votes. The contest was really between Gladstone and Round, who had had to admit that, four times in his life, he had attended a dissenting place of worship. Whether this was fatal or not, Gladstone beat him by 997 to 824.

The reference to the Oxford Movement in Gladstone's account was explained by the fact that the Tractarian controversy still raged and only six years had passed since the appearance of Tract No. 90.

But Gladstone had to fight hard again in 1852, his opponent being the Warden of Merton, who was acclaimed as one who might be trusted,

at a time when the stability of the Protestant succession, the authority of a Protestant Queen and even the Christianity of the national character, had been rudely assailed by Rome on one side, and on the other by democratic associations directed against the union of the Christian Church with the British Constitution.

At such a time, it was urged, the University needed a "*Protestant representative.*" But Gladstone beat him 1,108 to 758, Inglis remained at the head of the poll.

In 1853 the fight was sterner, and Greville noted :

The elections are all going well except Gladstone's who appears to be in great jeopardy. Nothing could exceed the disgraceful conduct of his opponents, lying, tricking, and shuffling, as might be expected from such a Party. The best thing that could happen for Gladstone would be to be beaten, if it were not what a triumph it would be for the blackguards who have got up the contest ; for the representation of Oxford is always an embarrassment to a statesman and Peel's losing his election there in 1829 was the most fortunate event possible for him.

However, Gladstone was elected, with Dudley Perceval as his runner-up, though the majority was only 124. The contest had begun ominously with a letter from a former friend and supporter, Archdeacon Denison, "I have to state

to you, as one of your constituents, that from this time I can place no confidence in you as representative of the University of Oxford, or as a public man." Percevel was Denison's candidate. Moreover, Mowbray, who had been on Gladstone's committee at the two previous elections, refused to serve again. In 1858 Gladstone beat Lord Chandos by 190, but feeling against him had grown very strong and it was determined to put up a really powerful candidate against him in the person of Gathorne Hardy. Since the last election a change had been made by which electors, instead of having to vote in person, could nominate any other elector of the same University to deliver for them at the poll voting papers containing their votes. The poll was open for five days and there were some amusing incidents. Thus Bishop Wilberforce, of Oxford, a strong Gladstonian, appeared booted and spurred, being about to ride out to his Palace. The Vice-Chancellor said, "You must vote in your canonicals, you know." When he returned, his vote was queried on the ground that he was a peer. Actually, several peers voted for Gladstone, but Hardy's managers were so certain of victory that they did not press for a scrutiny which would have disallowed these votes. One professor, weak in his aspirates, and intending to vote for Hardy, began, "Glad . . . I mean 'Ardy." The Tories claimed the vote on the ground that the professor had not finished "Gladstone," but, answered the Liberals, "He never began 'Hardy'." In the result, Gladstone was beaten by 180 votes and went out into the electoral world, as he boasted, "Unmuzzled" in 1865.

The University franchise belongs to all who have been granted a degree (not Honorary) by their University or by a University which is part of a University constituency, as in the case of the Scottish and combined English Universities. The Act of 1918 forbade all personal voting and established the system of voting by post alone.

It also provided a system of Proportional Representation :

At a contested election for a University constituency where there are two or more members to be elected any election of the full number of members shall be according to the principles of P.R., each elector having one transferable vote.

This has produced some interesting contests as, for instance, at the election of 1929, when three exceptionally distinguished men—Lord Hugh Cecil (Lord Quickswood), Sir Charles Oman, and Professor Gilbert Murray were the candidates. The total number of votes given was 11,463. The first count showed Lord Hugh Cecil 6,012, Professor Murray 3,277, Sir Charles Oman 2,174. Under the new system the quota necessary for election was 3,822. Lord Hugh Cecil, therefore, was elected and, the second votes of his surplus papers having been distributed, the final result showed that Sir Charles Oman was elected for the second seat, the figures being 4,112 to 3,519 for Professor Murray.

In 1867 London University received one member and Edinburgh and St. Andrews Universities combined received one member, and Glasgow and Aberdeen one member. This has been modified so that now the four Scottish Universities form a constituency returning three members ; since 1918, Queen's University, Belfast, returns one member. In England the combined Universities of Durham, Manchester, Liverpool, Leeds, Sheffield, Birmingham and Bristol return two members, and in Wales the University returns one member. These constituencies have attracted a number of distinguished men of all Parties and here again P.R. has produced some interesting results.

In the case of London there was actually an embarrassment of riches at the first election in 1868. Robert Lowe, the same who had shaken his head over the Reform Bill of the previous year, was eventually chosen, but R. H. Hutton, of *Spectator* fame, was anxious to secure the return of Walter Bagehot. Others who were favoured were Sir John Lubbock, Dr. Wood, Dr. William Miller (Treasurer of the Royal

Society), and J. R. Quain, afterwards the Judge. Eventually, all withdrew except Lowe and Bagehot. But Bagehot, who for all his wisdom, sometimes let his pen run away with him, was so ill-advised as to make what was regarded as a charge of personal corruption against Disraeli.

Mr. Disraeli believes that by influence and corruption the mass of voters may be made to . . .

This effectually frightened off many of his supporters and Lowe was left without a contest, to watch the working out of his own thesis, "We must educate our masters." Sir John Lubbock became member in his turn.

Nothing has been said here about the long history of Trinity College, Dublin (Dublin University), which returned two members to the Irish House of Commons from Stuart days and to the British Parliament after the Union until the establishment of Eire. The Reform Bill of 1918 gave a member to the National University of Ireland, but that lapsed at the same time.

CHAPTER XIII

SQUIBS AND CARTOONS

At all times pen and pencil have been potent forces in politics. Probably no one has ever undertaken the thankless task of ascertaining from the catalogue how many political pamphlets are to be found in the British Museum, but they must be numbered by thousands especially within the last three hundred years. And while, to a considerable extent, they emanated from Grub Street garrets, all sorts and conditions of men tried their hand at prose and verse on one side or other of politics, from Lying Tom Wharton, who boasted that with his Lilliburlero nonsense he had sung a King out of three Kingdoms, to Dean Swift and from Addison and Pope to Gray and Wordsworth. It was a fortunate day for Addison and for literature when Godolphin climbed his stairs in search of someone who could turn out a decent copy of verses in praise of Marlborough, Blenheim and the Ministry. George Canning wrote some effective political verse, such as "The Needy Knifegrinder," so did Praed, and even Tennyson occasionally strayed into politics and lectured Gladstone in somewhat portentous accents.

But the regulars were men like Gillray and Rowlandson in the 18th century among the cartoonists, and they generally did their own writing, making their characters deliver speeches in little. There were, of course, skilful satirists, such as Churchill and Hanbury Williams, who dipped their pens in gall. We may mention Junius, while avoiding any risk of coming under Disraeli's definition of a bore, by speculating on his identity, John Gifford and "Peter Pindar" (Dr. John Walcot), and the Rolliad, among others.

Some of the satire of the 18th and early 19th centuries almost blisters the paper on which it is written. People think

of Gray as the gentle poet of the *Elegy*, but here is part of what he wrote against Charles Fox's father :

Ah, said the sighing Peer, had Bute been true,
Nor Murray's, Rigby's, Bedford's friendship vain,
Far better scenes than these had blessed our view,
And realised the beauties which we feign.
Purged by the sword, and purified by fire,
Then had we seen proud London's hated walls.
Owls would have hooted in St. Peter's choir,
And foxes stunk and littered in St. Paul's.

And here is Shelley on Castlereagh :

I met Murder on the way—
He had a mask like Castlereagh—
Very smooth he looked, yet grim ;
Seven bloodhounds followed him ;
Four were fat ; and well they might
Be in admirable plight,
For one by one and two by two,
He tossed them human hearts to chew,
Which from his wide cloak he drew.

After this, Churchill's fiercest invective seems pale. Sir Charles Hanbury Williams had a much lighter touch, but he could be effective. The old Duchess of Marlborough left the elder Pitt a handsome legacy after Walpole had turned him out and made a "patriot" of him. But very soon Pitt made his peace with the Government, and Hanbury Williams proceeded to evoke the ghost of the Duchess, crying, "Return, base villian, my retaining fee," and reminding Pitt that even Judas returned the fee for his betrayal.

James Gillray was born in 1757, son of a Scotsman who died as a Chelsea pensioner. Young James showed a great talent for drawing and was apprenticed to an engraver, studied at the Royal Academy and was a great admirer of Hogarth, who ought perhaps to be called the father of the

political cartoon. Gillray was influenced also by Sayer, who had a considerable reputation in the last half of the 18th century as a cartoonist. But Gillray was soon at the top of his profession and there were always crowds before the window, first in Bond Street, then in St. James's Street,



THE CARLTON CLUB DURING THE GENERAL ELECTION (1885)

whither Mrs. Humphreys, the print-seller, in whose house Gillray worked and lived for many years, had moved from the Strand. And people recorded how the "saunterer" of the seventeen nineties and later would be driven from the foot-path on to the carriage way by the crowds before the windows. Grego says :

Gillray found political caricature in its struggling infancy. He brought the art to the fullest maturity. He carried it far above the heads of the crowd and soared to such heights that we regard its bolder flights with an apprehension which qualifies the admiration that his dexterity must always exact.

In 1796 suggestions were being made to Canning with a view to attaching Gillray to the Tory cause, but Canning seems to have been cautious and nothing much came of this, though a little later he was called in to lend a hand in the *Anti-Jacobin* and a meeting was arranged at last between Gillray and Canning.

But Gillray worked best when left to his own imagination and there was a constant demand for his caricatures and, among other places, at Buckingham Palace, though he never spared the King and sometimes treated him with downright brutality. It might be said, generally, that Gillray got a great deal more detail into his caricatures than is usual now. One might, for instance, spend a long time looking into his "Posting to the Election," or his "Entrance of Earl Wolf (Lord Lonsdale) into Blackhaven." The same might be said of other caricaturists of the age as, for instance, George Cruikshank's "Effects of Female Enfranchisement" or Cruikshank's "The Law's Delay." Indeed, no one can claim to have studied electioneering in the bad old days who has not called to his aid Gillray, Cruikshank, Rowlandson, and H.B.

Rowlandson was born in 1756 and took a wider range than Gillray, for he exhibited pretty regularly at the Royal Academy. Some of his work might be regarded as too savage for our taste, but he was a very powerful influence in his day. Charles Fox was one of his favourite subjects in cartoons like "The Wit's Last Stake" and "The Lords of the Bedchamber." His "The Westminster Watchman," showing Fox wearing the Cap of Liberty supported by the Staff of Uprighteousness, guarded by his dog Vigilance and by his Lantern of Truth must have been much in request in the

Westminster Election of 1784, and his "Procession to the Hustings" gives some valuable information about feminine millinery. Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, was also one of his favourite subjects.

Macaulay, having to wait a few minutes at Downing Street in 1831, was pleasantly amused by the discovery on a table of a volume of the anti-Government satires of H.B., an artist who managed to conceal his identity, for his real name was John Doyle. Doyle was regarded as a Tory cartoonist and his favourite victim was Brougham. Some of his work would be considered fairly strong nowadays, and from 1829 to 1851 he was probably the most popular caricaturist of the day in politics, though Thackeray (who had at one time ambitions in the same direction) complained that "You never hear any laughing at H.B. ; his pictures are a great deal too genteel for that," but he admitted the exceeding cleverness of the work. Haydon admired H.B.'s work and among the most enthusiastic collectors of it was Metternich. W. Heath was another popular caricaturist of the times.

If the Westminster elections had provided ample material for those great masters Gillray and Rowlandson and Cruikshank, the Reform agitation kept Doyle, Heath and others fully employed. Doyle had done his best against the Reform agitation and the Grey Government, facts which accounted for the amused surprise with which Macaulay found the volume of H.B. on the table at No. 10 Downing Street, but when the fight was over, he found plenty of new material in telling the Tories that they had only to adapt themselves to the times to return to power again. So he drew John Bull as an awakened householder leaning out of his window and calling upon the (Tory) waits to play something new. "I'm tired of your infernal 'God Save the King' and 'Rule Britannia'." A cartoon with a very modern application.

There was, of course, an enormous amount of verse poured out between 1770 and 1830, but it was of a much lower

calibre than the satire of the age of Pope ; except, of course, when a great poet took part. Volumes probably would be required to contain all the doggerel saluting Georgiana, Duchess of Devonshire, and her assistants in 1784. Here is a sample :

Some strive to wound the virtuous name
Of Devonshire's, Duncannon's fame,
That beauteous, peerless pair ;
And all the toiling earnest throng
Let's celebrate in tuneful song
The brunette and the fair.

And here is a description of Covent Garden during a Westminster election :

A Paradise for fools and knaves ;
A Hell for constables and slaves ;
A booth for mountebanks and heavers ;
A shop for marrowbones and cleavers ;
A stage for bulls and Irish Chairmen ;
A pit for Foxes, for to rear them ;
In short, such are most glorious places
For Duchesses to show their faces.

And so we might continue indefinitely. Grub Street must have prayed for elections.

Of the later cartoonists, John Leech was the most famous, he was long first cartoonist of *Punch* and his fame endures. Dean Hole wrote of him :

He made a wide distinction between those who did evil wilfully from chronic malevolence and those who were but seldom overtaken by a fault ; but while he would hack about him like Don Quixote among the puppets when he fell among thieves, when he was intent on unmasking hypocrites . . . he dealt gently with the ignorant and weak. He sent all reprobates to the pillory, and bade the neighbours pelt ; but he let folly go with a box on the ear or with a rebuke which hurt more than a blow.

He did 600 cartoons for *Punch*. Second cartoonist for a time was the younger Doyle, who designed the familiar cover. This brings us to Tenniel, criticisms of whom might recall that of Thackeray on H.B. But it was said of him that he ennobled caricature and his cartoons were looked for eagerly for many years from the middle sixties onward. The most famous, probably, was "Dropping the Pilot." But there were occasionally cartoonists of the mid-Victorian period who did not follow the Leech-Tenniel model. There was, for instance, what would now be considered a shocking attack on Queen Victoria for her supposed preference for Germans and Scots. She is shown thrashing the British Lion who has refused to eat a German sausage, while John Brown and other Highlanders and a number of German militarists applaud, to the grief of John Bull and his wife.

We come now to rather delicate ground as we get nearer to our own time, but the best known of the many cartoonists between 1890 and the first world war was F. C. Gould. He had illustrated the Christmas number of *Truth* and had contributed cartoons to the *Pall Mall Gazette*. When my uncle became editor of that paper in 1890 Gould became its regular staff cartoonist and he went with my uncle to the new *Westminster Gazette* when the *Pall Mall* was sold to the other side. Joseph Chamberlain was his favourite victim and was said to have made an extensive collection of the cartoons at his expense. Gould found one of his inspirations in "Alice" and his Mad Tea Party was as near perfection in the art of political cartoon as could be wished. He said of himself that he "etched with vinegar, not vitriol." How far the same may be true of some of the work of his most famous successor of today might be a matter for dispute, though of its effectiveness and wit there can be no question. It has been true probably of most great cartoonists that they had favourite subjects. As mentioned already, Gould's was Chamberlain; E. T. Reed's was Lecky and then Masterman; perhaps



"THE START"

(Great Race between the G.O.M. and the "Markiss")

Tenniel's was Randolph Churchill ; Furniss's was Gladstone ; Rowlandson's was Fox ; Gillray's may have been George III, but Gillray was universal ; H.B.'s was Brougham. Most people would say that Low's was Colonel Blimp, but perhaps he never excelled his Lloyd George in the coalition period of 1918-1922. Max has been a universal rather than a political cartoonist.

Samuel Foote, born in 1720, was the chief dramatic satirist of the middle 18th century and in a succession of comedies and farces he presented to his contemporaries and to posterity various sides of the folly and corruption of the age. It was in "The Nabob" that he attacked the electors and the corrupt boroughs. He introduces a territorial magnate of long ancestry whose wife is upbraiding him for his failure to make any stand against the incursions of a Nabob.

"From the public and private virtues of your ancestors, the inhabitants of the neighbouring borough thought their best and dearest interests in no hands so secure as in theirs. Not till lately were they so tainted with the fashion of the times as to adopt the egregious absurdity that to be faithfully served and protected it was necessary to be largely bribed and corrupted."

Presently we are introduced to the levée of Sir Matthew Mite, the Nabob on whom wait certain citizens introduced by Touchit.

"My name, Sir, is Touchit, and these gentlemen some friends and neighbours of mine. We are ordered by the Christian Club of the borough of Brib'em to wait upon your Honour with a tender of the nomination of our two members at the ensuing election."

The Nabob has sufficient curiosity to ask how the Christian Club of Brib'em came by its name and Mr. Touchit is more than willing to enlighten him.

"Our name, Sir, comes from our strict union and brotherly kindness. We hang together like the primitive Christians too. We have all things

in common. If a bargain is struck and the deposit made, as a proof that we love our neighbours as well as ourselves we submit to an equal partition ; no man has a larger share than another. Yes, Sir, in our borough all is unity now ; formerly we had nothing but discontent and heart-burnings among us ; each man perilous and afraid that his neighbour got more and did better than he. Why, I remember at the election some time ago when I took up my freedom, I could get but thirty guineas for a new pair of jack boots whilst Tom Rankin over the way had £50 for a pair of washleather breeches."

The value of this lies in the fact that, in his presentation of titled corruption in the Duke of Newcastle and of townsmen like Touchit, Foote kept very near to reality. All over the country there were counterparts of the Christian Club of Brib'em with managers like Touchit to see that everyone got his share ; though to be sure it happened on occasions, as in the notorious case of Grampound, that there was not much honour among thieves.

Political satire of our own time has nothing so pungent as this. Occasionally political figures have been brought upon the scene for the amusement of electors—Gladstone, Lowe and Ayrton in the eighteen seventies, Chamberlain and Carson in the early nineteen hundreds, but there have been, less savagely drawn, some fairly effective satires.

During the great Jingo craze in 1878 a familiar chorus was parodied :

We don't want to fight ; but, by Jingo, if we do,
We won't go to the front ourselves, we'll send the mild Hindoo.

This was an allusion to the Government policy of bringing troops from India to the Mediterranean during the crisis of that period. A contemporary poem of Tennyson's was roughly handled "in an attempt to arrange his noble words in truly patriotic, protectionist and anti-Aboriginal circles." Here is the first stanza :

A health to Jingo first, and then
 A health to shell, a health to shot.
 The man who hates not other men
 I deem no perfect patriot.
 To all who hold all England mad
 We drink ; to all who tax her food
 We pledge the man who hates the Rad,
 We drink to Bartle Frere and Froude.

Grant Duff in his Diary for 1875 mentions an acrostic of the time directed against Gladstone :

G was the great man mountain of mind,
 L a logician expert and refined ;
 A was an adept in rhetoric's art,
 D was the dark spot he had in his heart ;
 S was the subtlety led him astray,
 T was the truth which he bartered away ;
 O was the cypher his conscience became,
 N The new light which enlightened the same ;
 E was the Evil One shouting with joy,
 At it and down with it, Gladstone, my boy.

A girl who heard this sat down at once and produced a counter-blast :

G is the genius that governs the nation,
 L is the Lords who require education,
 A is the animus raised by the great,
 D is the donkeys who fear for the State ;
 S is the standard that Liberals raise,
 T is the Tories who howl in dispraise ;
 O is Opposition, wanting a head,
 N is the nation, not driven, but led ;
 E is old England shouting for joy,
 Stick to the Government, Gladstone, my boy.

University elections have generally produced many squibs of their own and no less a person than "Lewis Carroll" wrote



THE LAST EMBRACE

Mrs. MICAWBER : I ne-ver-will-desert-Mr. Micawber

(By permission of the "News Chronicle")

what was considered by the elect to be a very superior example in the Gladstone-Hardy fight of 1865, though perhaps somewhat erudite for ordinary people. But a genuine squib was evoked by Bishop Wilberforce's complaint when Archdeacon Clarke became Chairman of Hardy's Oxford Committee—"They plough with my heifer." To which Dean Mansel retorted :

When the versatile Bishop of Oxford's famed city
Cast his eyes on the Chairman of Hardy's Committee,
Said Samuel—from Samson a metaphor taken—
They plough with my heifer, that is my Archdeacon ;
But when Samuel himself leaves his friends in the lurch
To vote with the foes of the State and the Church,
It proves without doubt, and the spectacle shocks one
That Dissenters can plough with Episcopal Oxon.

Some Christmas numbers in Victorian days used to produce more or less elaborate satire, notably that of *Truth*. In the election of 1906 the Conservatives made much play with a version of the "Lady from Riga," showing Redmond as the tiger and the Liberal Party as the lady, which was aimed at the supposition that the Campbell Bannerman Government would have to depend on Irish Nationalist votes. The event was far otherwise but, as generally happens with bad guesses, that poster seemed to be everlasting, and on many a hoarding it continued to mock the beaten Party for weeks after the election.

CHAPTER XIV

YESTERDAY AND TOMORROW

WHEN Parliament was dissolved in 1945, it contained 358 Conservatives and 164 Labour, making 552 out of a total of 615, there were also 42 Liberals and 20 Independents. When the new Parliament met it had 394 Labour members in a total of 640, 188 Conservatives, 25 Liberals, and 14 Independents. No one was prepared for so great a change. Down to the last, Conservative papers were talking of a Churchill majority of 50 to 100, while on the other side, if there was quiet confidence, there was no indication that so great a triumph was expected ; nor indeed was it suggested by any of the various pre-election "polls."

It is true perhaps that dead elections are usually better left to bury their dead, but there may be a certain value for the future in considering the causes which produced so great a turnover among the 32,836,419 citizens entitled to vote, of whom as many as 25,000,000 actually voted, or 75 per cent. of the whole.

The personality of Mr. Churchill bulked so largely in the contest that it must be said that, in the opinion of many friendly observers, he set the wrong note in his first Broadcast and did not succeed in retrieving the situation later. Not that there is anything surprising in the fact that the veteran of many election fights, the great and trusted war leader preoccupied with a thousand problems of war and peace, adopted a tone which had been so effective in the Manchester campaign of forty years earlier when, as Addison wrote of his ancestor at Blenheim, "He rode the whirlwind" and "directed the storm," in the 1906 Liberal triumph.

Small blame to him, so preoccupied, if he did not realise that there had come into existence an entirely new constitu-

ency, knowing little or nothing of political history, bored by the rhetoric of the Gladstonian era. Everything had changed since Mr. Gladstone made his first memorable progress through the country to fight and win Midlothian. It seems beyond doubt that his Party managers miscalculated entirely the effect of Mr. Churchill's progress through the country. The true meaning of the enthusiasm with which he was greeted was put compactly enough by a London working man, who said, "Cheer him ? Of course we cheered him. Done a good job he had and we don't forget it neither. But this is different ; we aren't going to vote for him ; there's things we want and we know where to go for them." To talk about ingratitude to Mr. Churchill is just nonsense.

And here we get to the important lesson which the election teaches. This election was like no other in modern history. In 1931 the people were frightened and Conservatism swept the country ; in 1945 the people were eager and impatient and Labour was the cry. The huge new electorate cared little about Party loyalties and political abstractions. It thought it knew what it wanted and, having listened to both sides, made up its mind that it wanted a change. In this it was in key with the world at large ; as in 1848, there was a world movement to the Left and, as then, the movement in this country was quiet and orderly rather than revolutionary. There are few "little Liberals or little Conservatives" being born into the country today. Indeed it cannot be doubted that the very fact of a family tradition inclines modern youth to break with that tradition.

The change that was coming was to be discerned in thousands of High Streets all over the country, but many political observers of 1945 left "High Street" out of their calculations. High Street was thronged with young women wheeling perambulators. They knew nothing of political history ; the labels of a past age did not exist for them but they had certain very definite ideas, ideas founded on their

own immediate needs and surroundings. They wanted their men to come back to something different from the England of 1939 ; they wanted houses, better houses built to make work easier, they wanted good jobs at good wages for their men ; they wanted, above all things, security for the occupants of their perambulators. They were eager to accept the promises made to them by Labour candidates ; they talked things over among themselves and made up their minds how they would vote. Many of them, no doubt, felt no particular interest in Socialistic dogmas and none whatever in Marx who existed for them only in the cinema. It was High Street which won the last election.

This does not mean, I think, that the political world is safe for the Labour Party. High Street has no use for "my Party, right or wrong," it will shape its course in any future election by the practical results of the power which it has now placed in the hands of the Labour Party.

What are the prospects of the future ? It is generally said, in spite of Disraeli's dictum that strong Governments generally fall to pieces while weak ones hang on, that the present Government, though it has no lack of strong personalities, is likely to hold together for the natural length of the present Parliament, though there are other possibilities, such as a serious disagreement between the two Houses, in which case the Government might choose to go to the country instead of waiting for the normal processes of the Parliament Act. The cry of "the People against the Lords" would be a strong one. But, assuming that the Parliament lives out its natural life, there is room for speculation. Are we going to see a period of a slowed-down pendulum so that periods of twenty years without substantial political changes may become the rule ? A Labour Government might appeal for a fresh lease of life on the ground that it has not had time to make good all its promises. Would this appeal to "High Street" ? Or will High Street be impatient and decide to see

what the other people have to offer : Obviously, there is danger in any prospect of Parties bidding against each other in the name of progress, but may not this be one outcome of the abandonment of old Party loyalty : The danger is not overlooked in either camp and efforts are being made on both sides to "educate our masters" before they reach voting age.

Another matter for speculation concerns the possible evolution of new Parties. It seems reasonably certain that the two main Parties system will continue to exist, but under what titles : Will the Trade Union influence be strong enough to prevent the adoption of the Socialist label : Shall we see Parties calling themselves "Socialists" and "Liberal" ; a new Liberal Party being formed from the right wing of what is now called Labour, and the centre and left wing of what is now called Conservative compete for the majority : On their flanks would be the Communists at one extreme and the hard-shell Tories at the other.

Of the actual machinery of election, not many changes are in view ; a claim has been made and will be made again for lowering the franchise age to eighteen. Something may well be heard on the question of compulsory voting. The election of July, 1945, did, by common consent, excite less interest, but the total poll was less than seventy-five per cent. In some countries compulsory voting was introduced some years ago and within the next few years it is possible that France and Italy may follow suit. On the other hand, it has been argued that the votes of the people, too apathetic to avail themselves of the use of the franchise, can be of little value. As it was put by the *Manchester Guardian* in January, 1946, "One may wonder whether virtue, even in its political shape, may ever be imposed by decree."

As for electoral devices, enquiry suggested that the plan of broadcast speeches over a period of a fortnight was a fairly complete failure. Not many of the orators had a good

broadcasting manner, and even the politically-minded became tired of the whole affair long before it ended. Declarations of policy by the leaders of the chief Parties are reasonable and are certain of a wide hearing.

But bawling through the streets of speeches reproduced by mechanical means with slow-travelling motor cars was generally disliked and had little or no value except perhaps in reminding people of the times when meetings were to be held. On the other hand, meetings were generally well attended and often crowded; nor probably was that "beastly bellowing" which, with some people who cannot listen to any opinions other than their own, takes the place of argument, a greater nuisance than in the past. There is little evidence of any advance towards a general adoption of any form of Proportional Representation and though it is argued that it has been tried in countries with populations certainly not more intelligent than in this country, converts are few in spite of energetic advocacy by Liberals who did not bring in measures for its adoption in their long period of prosperity.

On the whole then, and looking at it with such information as is available in 1946, no very great changes in method of election are likely, and indeed political Parties may address themselves rather to political education between elections than to any intensive herding of voters when elections come.

It cannot be said that progress towards finding younger candidates of both sexes has gone as far as was hoped. While, on the one hand, a seat in Parliament is regarded as a retiring pension or, at least, a testimonial for long Trade Union service and while, on the other side, constituencies put themselves up for sale almost as blatantly as in the 18th century by nominating the candidate with the longest purse, little improvement can be expected here. Possibly before the next election it will have been made possible for candidates to live

on their salaries, which is a very different thing from establishing a corps of professional politicians.

In closing this survey, I would add that the final triumph, the true freedom and independence for the Parliamentary elector lies ultimately in the elector's own hands. If the elector chooses men on the grounds laid down by Burke at Bristol, regarding members as representatives, but not as delegates, choosing candidates who seem to live up to the responsibilities which membership of Parliament involves, then the trials and tribulations through which, in 750 years of development, we have achieved a real democracy, will not have been in vain.

* * * * *

THE last chapter was written early in 1946 when the present Government was still in its early phase and the prospects of a General Election lay far in the future but, looking backward and forward, from the late summer of 1948 something must be added. The Government's decision to increase the salaries of members caused a little grumbling from the constituents, but the conditions of Parliamentary service and the value of money have both changed since 1939. It was certain that the Labour Party, combining power with Office for the first time, would have many Bills to introduce involving long hours of important debates. The House of Commons, especially, is no longer "the best club"; it is a workshop demanding a great deal of overtime. No conscientious member of today can take his duties lightly. Moreover the constituencies themselves began to demand more from their members. Electors were content no longer with an occasional visit and they crowded into the Gallery of the House of Commons intent on seeing their representatives at work.

Meanwhile, since 1944 there has been a long series of

conferences on electoral matters and the redistribution of seats has been undertaken. Boundary Commissioners have been at work and have had to reconsider their first decisions. In the result the Representation of the People's Bill, 1948, was introduced and what was in effect a new Franchise Act was passed through both Houses.

It will be sufficient here to name some of the principal provisions of the New Act. Generally speaking the aim in view was the simplification of the whole system and the establishment of the rule of one citizen one vote and one constituency one member. In place of the clauses in previous Acts dealing with the various special franchises (University and business men's franchise, for instance) Part I of the new Act states simply :

The Persons qualified to vote as electors at a Parliamentary election in any constituency shall be those resident there on the qualifying date who, on that date and on the date of the poll, are British subjects of full age and not subject to any legal incapacity to vote.

Thus a resident's qualification is now the only qualification for the Parliamentary franchise.

There are to be two registers a year for the restoration of the system of registration of civilian electors in operation from 1918 to 1939 and an important change is that the cost of the registration will in future be divided between the Exchequer and the local authorities at an estimated cost of about £500,000 a year.

Careful provision is made to ensure that service men and others absent perforce shall not be excluded from the franchise.

Every effort has been made in the Act to cut down the expenses of candidates. At a cost to the taxpayer of £350,000 an official polling card is sent out to every registered elector. With regard to candidates' expenses :

(a) In relation to an election in a county constituency four

hundred and fifty pounds together with an additional twopence for each entry in the register of Parliamentary electors, used at the election.

- (b) In relation to an election in a Borough constituency four hundred and fifty pounds together with an additional penny halfpenny to each such entry.

These are the maximum expenses permitted apart from a candidate's personal expenses, but they must cover the whole of any fee paid to the candidate's election agent. A candidate may send free an address to every elector by post. Provision is made for the use of rooms for meetings during the contest. Where the candidate's deposit of £150 is not to be forfeited it is in future to be returned to him as soon as possible after the election instead of being retained until he has taken the oath as a member. There is a special embargo on the use of any wireless transmitting station outside the United Kingdom for the transmission of election propaganda. In future, in the case of a tie, a decision will be made by lot.

The period for the delivery of nomination papers is extended and the candidate's description on his nomination paper may not refer to his political activities in future. The existing prohibition of expenses incurred by persons not authorised by an election agent is extended and a number of restrictions on purposes for which candidates may incur expenses in the employment of motor vehicles are added.

Some of the provisions of the new Act, notably the final disappearance of fancy franchises such as the business vote and the University constituencies gave rise to heated debates as did the disfranchisement of the City of London as a separate constituency, though this was met in part by forming a constituency of the Cities of London and Westminster. Some of the work of redistribution was warmly criticised, but on the whole no Franchise Bill of equal importance has

had so easy a passage. A more contentious Parliament Act will strengthen the power of the elected House.

Looking back over a long life in which politics and political history have been a vivid and continuous interest, I make a present to the cynics of my belief that the electorate which will return the next House of Commons will be the most Representative, the most Free and the most Independent which Democracy can hope to achieve in an imperfect world.

REPRESENTATION OF THE PEOPLE

THE FIVE REFORM ACTS

MAIN DETAILS

Great Britain and
Northern Ireland only

1832	1867-8	1884-5	1918	1928
56 Boroughs with 112 members disfranchised, 30 lost one of their members	Counties Franchise Ownership of property of £5 annual value or occupation at £12 per annum	Assimilation of County to Borough Franchise. Charter of Countrymen and Landworkers	Universal Franchise for Males. Six months' Residence Business Qualification Franchise. Votes for Service Men of 1914-18, ages 19-21	Universal Franchise. Men and Women on equal terms
County Franchise for 40s. Free- holders, copyholders, leaseholders, tenants-at- will of £50 per annum.	Borough Franchise Male householders rated to the Poor Rate. Lodgers resident one year and paying £10 rent	Extensive Redistri- bution. Boroughs under 15,000 disfranchised. All under 50,000 reduced to one member	Franchise for Women of 30 or over.	—
Borough Franchise for men of full age, occupy- ing house, warehouse, or shop with land value £10 per annum. Freemen	Two-member constituencies raised to 10,000 population	London 62 members Manchester nine Liverpool nine Glasgow seven Birmingham seven	Deposit of £150 from all candidates forfeited if polling less than one-eighth of total votes cast. All Polls same day	—
Two-day polls	Three members given to four large towns	—	Members for English, Welsh and Irish Universities. P.R. for all Universities	Women's Charter
More polling booths	Franchise to London and Scottish Universities	County Dwellers' Charter	Re- distribution	—
Registration	Town Dwellers' Charter	—	—	—
General effect : A Middle- Class Charter	—	—	—	—
Total Electorate 1,000,000 M.P.'s 658	Total Electorate 2,500,000 M.P.'s 658	Total Electorate 5,000,000 M.P.'s 670	Total Electorate 21,000,000 M.P.'s 707	Total Electorate 28,500,000 M.P.'s 615

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